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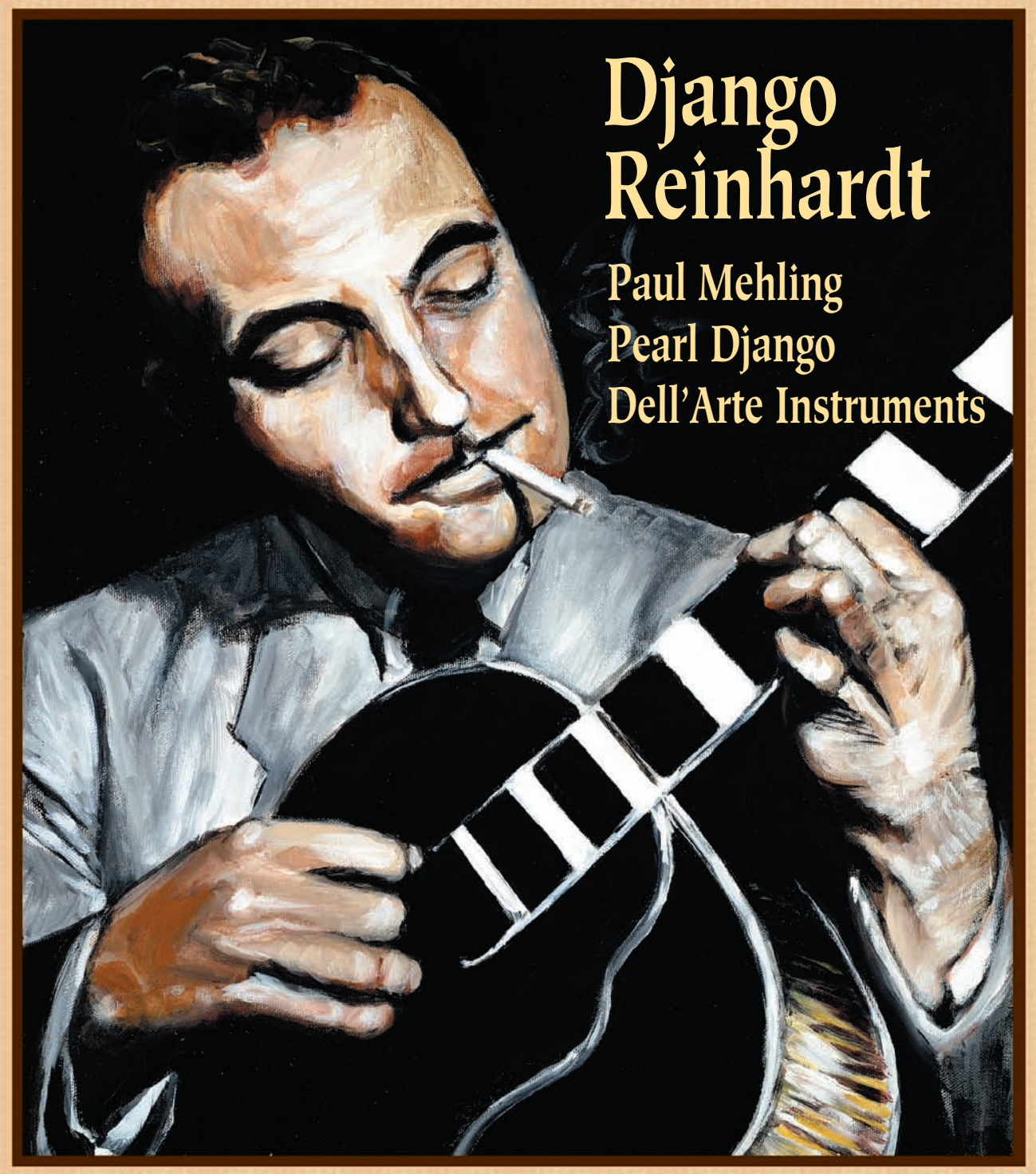
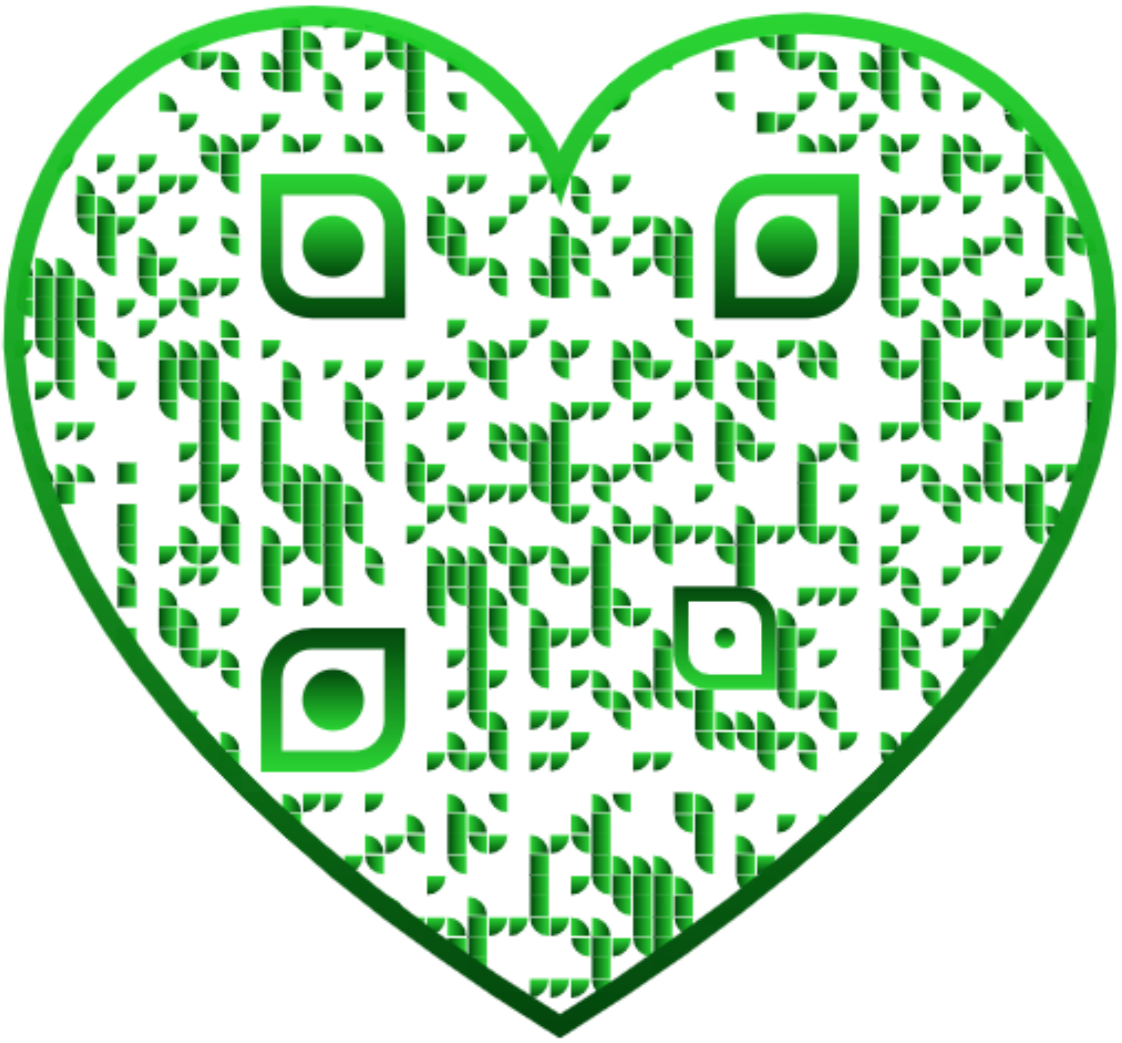
Volume 6, Number 3 March/April 2002





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How to Duplicate & Promote an Acoustic CD Release

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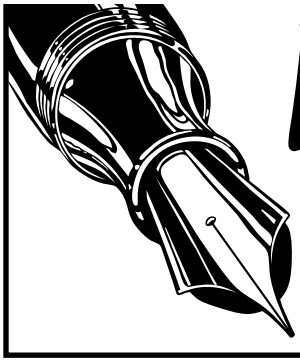


EDITOR'S PAGE

Gypsy Jazz Issue

Welcome to our Gypsy jazz issue honoring the music of the great Django Reinhardt. For years we have received requests from readers asking to publish more Gypsy jazz music. Ever since the first request came in about five years ago I have been promising a Gypsy jazz issue. So, finally, here it is!

The problem I've encountered in trying to present a Gypsy jazz issue is that there are far more artists worthy of a feature article than we could possibly fit into one issue. This issue is the tip of a very big iceberg! We have tried to make mention of as many Gypsy jazz style players as possible in Dave McCarty's lead story on Django, Dave's article on "Django's Heir's," and with Ted Gottsegen's extensive CD reviews. However, this cursory coverage of the Gypsy jazz music scene not only fails to give proper coverage of these players, there are many great players that we have not had space to mention at all. To these players and their fans, we apologize. We will not only make an effort to feature these artists in future issues, but we have also asked Paul Mehling to write a "Gypsy Jazz Guitar" column as a regular feature in *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*.

There are several people who did a lot of work behind the scenes to make this issue possible. First I want to thank John Kinnard of Dell'Arte instruments for the great painting of Django that we used on this issue's cover. I also want to thank Alain Cola of Dell'Arte for supplying us with many photos and for putting us in contact with Mike Peters. Mike Peters provided us with five of the photos of Django that we used in conjunction with the cover story. We thank Mike for allowing us to use photos from his archive. Additional thanks is due to François Charle for allowing us to use a couple of photos out of his outstanding Selmer-Maccaferri book (see the book review in the reviews section of this issue). I would also like to thank Ted Gottsegen and Jerry Rudy for their excellent reviews. Ted's extensive reviews of the CDs from Europe is greatly appreciated. Finally, I need to thank David McCarty for his work putting together three great feature articles and several reviews. Dave is a big fan of this music and has been gently nudging me to publish this issue for years.

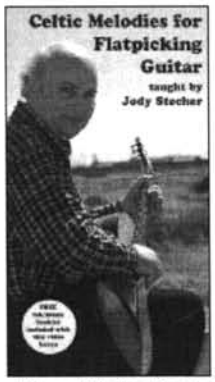
You'll notice that several of our regular columnists have had to sit out of this issue. We had so much great Gypsy jazz stuff come in that I had to cut out three of our regular columns in order to make room for it all—and we still ran 4 pages long this time. For those of you who are fans of Dan Huckabee, Chris Jones, and Harold Streeter, don't worry, they will be back next time.

For those of you who are die hard fans of bluegrass, I hope that you will still enjoy this issue. Even though you may not regularly play this style of music, there is a lot to be learned from it. Doc, Tony, Clarence, and many other great flatpickers have been influenced by Django Reinhardt's playing. Maybe you will also find a lick or two in this issue that you can fit into your favorite fiddle tune or bluegrass breakdown. We will be back on the bluegrass trail in the next issue. In addition to our regular columnist's articles, we have some great stuff from Dan Crary, Beppe Gambetta, and Steve Kilby that will appear in upcoming issues.

Please enjoy this special Gypsy jazz issue!

Bluegrass Lead Guitar
taught by Scott Nygaard

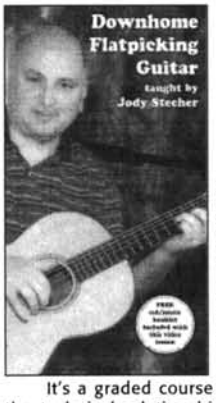
In this video, renowned guitarist Scott Nygaard guides you through the old-time fiddle tune *Little Billy Wilson*, a crosspicking arrangement of *Home Sweet Home*, a melodic solo on the blues song *Trouble in Mind* and shows you how to combine these influences when creating a solo on a bluegrass tune like *East Virginia Blues*. Scott explains in detail the techniques needed to master the bluegrass lead guitar style and the ideas behind his arrangements. All are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW604 $29.95***



Celtic Melodies for Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

The colorful tones of the guitar are well suited to the music of Ireland and Scotland. Jody Stecher has developed a unique approach to flatpicking Celtic music drawing on the sounds and techniques of the harp, fiddle and pipes. This video lesson presents a graded course starting with simpler fingering with special attention to picking techniques. Building on a base of a confident and deliberate right hand, more challenging left hand work is gradually introduced.

Titles include: ***Reel*** *Sheehan's Reel •* ***Jig*** *The Connaughtman's Rambles •* ***March*** *A Trip To Mabou Ridge •* ***Strathspey*** *The Devil In The Kitchen •* ***Reel*** *Muilleann Dubh •* ***Reel*** *Doctor Gilbert* ***GW605 $29.95***



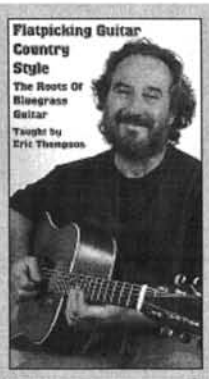
Downhome Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

Jody Stecher has long been America's least generic flatpicker. This video is both a roadmap of Jody's development as a flatpicking guitarist of mostly American vernacular music, and a guide to how any flatpicker can expand their expressive technique. Think of it as *"Flatpicking According to Jody"*.

It's a graded course starting with basics in which the technical relationship between fingerpicking and flatpicking is made clear. The first few pieces are great songs with memorable melodies but minimal fingering so that right hand fundamentals can be mastered. With each new tune more techniques are introduced and more and more fingerboard is used, both horizontally and vertically. The second half of the video is purely instrumental music and the tunes are more complex.

Titles include: Carter's Blues, It's Hard To Love, I Got A Bulldog, Leake County Blues, Arkansas Traveler, The Dawn and The Ship in Full Sail ***GW606 $29.95***

Flatpicking Guitar Country Style
The Roots of Bluegrass Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson



Eric Thompson will have you flatpicking lead breaks in styles from Maybelle Carter to Doc Watson. You'll learn to pick out the melody to songs like *East Virginia Blues, Sad and Lonesome Day* and *Shady Grove*. You will learn to embellish your playing with "hammer-ons" and "pull-offs" for the real old-time country sound. You'll build a solid technique, advancing step-by-step through single note arrangements of *Thompson's Rag*, fiddle hoedowns *Arkansas Traveler* and *Soldier's Joy*, and a bluesy bluegrass break for *Good Old Mountain Dew* (employing slippery slides and hot runs). Eric's invaluable tips on left hand fingering and right hand pick technique are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups.

GW 601 $29.95

Flatpicking Fiddle Tunes
Reels, Rags & Hoedowns
Taught by Eric Thompson

Old-time fiddle tunes are the bedrock upon which acoustic guitar flatpicking is built. Eric Thompson's strong, melodic picking has set a benchmark for taste and tone for nearly four decades. In this video Eric shares soulful arrangements of seven of his favorites, guiding you slowly, line-by-line through classics like *Texas Gals, Fish In The Millpond,* Scottish-Irish rooted *Miller's Reel* and *Stony Point,* mountain modal *Falls of Richmond,* swingin' *Kennedy Rag* and the bouncy *East Tennessee Blues.* You'll build your repertoire and hone your technique, exploring fingering patterns in six different keys which are all clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW 602 $29.95***

Bluegrass Crosspicking Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson

Crosspicking is an exciting flatpicking technique that is an essential part of every bluegrass guitarist's arsenal. Utilizing repeated patterns on three-string groups, crosspicking captures the bounce of a fiddler's double shuffle and the drive of three-finger banjo Scruggs-style rolls. Eric Thompson lays it out for you in easy to understand steps, illustrating the basic patterns with arrangements of *Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss, Blackberry Rag, Beaumont Rag, Wildwood Flower,* and *Cross-eyed Fiddler.* Split-screen close-ups let you see exactly what and how Eric is playing. ***GW 603 $29.95***

Beginner's Country Guitar
taught by Fred Sokolow

All you need to put over a good country song is your voice and a guitar. This video lesson gives you the tools you need to play old-fashioned country, honky-tonk and country rock. You'll learn how to play: Accompaniment strums for different rhythmic feels; a variety of first-position chords; bass runs; major scales; solos and turnarounds.

Tunes include: Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain, I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry, The Bottle Let Me Down, I'm Movin' On, Will The Circle Be Unbroken, Silver Wings and Jambalaya, ***GW407 $29.95***

Flatpicking Country Classics
taught by Fred Sokolow

In this 75 minute video Fred teaches nine standards every country picker/singer should know... from start to finish. You'll learn an intro for each song, a backup pattern and bass runs to play while singing, an instrumental solo, and an ending. Picking up where his *BEGINNER'S COUNTRY GU1TAR* video left off, Fred keeps the arrangements fairly simple but includes a few up-the-neck chord positions and hot licks. You'll learn solos and runs in five different keys. Each song is played at regular speed and then slowed down on a split-screen that gives you a close-up look at the picking hand and the chording hand.

Tunes include: New San Antonio Rose, Wild Side of Life, Waltz Across Texas, The Race is On, Beautiful Kentucky Waltz, That's the Way Love Goes, I Don't Hurt Anymore, Someone I Used To Know and City of New Orleans ***GW410 $29.95***

Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Dix Bruce

Hot guitar licks abound these days but simple melodies played along with chord strums on the low strings of the guitar have never lost their appeal. Pioneered in the 1920s by the great Mother Maybelle Carter, this combination of lead and rhythm guitar playing is the foundation upon which all traditional country, folk, bluegrass, and hot flatpicking guitar is based. In this video lesson Dix Bruce carefully teaches lead and backup guitar to nine great and classic country, bluegrass, and folk standards, ballads and hot breakdowns played by musicians the world over.

Tunes include: Worried Man Blues, Lonesome Valley, Storms Are On the Ocean, Handsome Molly, Wildwood Flower, Redwing, John Hardy, Jimmie Brown the Newsboy ***GW308 $29.95***

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Django Reinhardt

Photo courtesy Mike Peters

His Enduring Legacy

by David McCarty

Almost 50 years after his death, the amazing flatpicked acoustic guitar music of Django Reinhardt still captivates audiences and inspires musicians worldwide. The world's first true jazz guitar hero, Reinhardt and his cohort, violinist Stephane Grappelli, created the first jazz music based outside the African-American musical tradition. The infectious, often-manic swing music they created in the mid-1930s combined jazz, American pop tunes, the manouche Gypsy music of Django's boyhood, and more into a style as distinct and unique as Bill Monroe's distillation of bluegrass music from his musical mountain roots. Although not what many people would consider a true flatpicking style guitarist, Django was undoubtedly the most influential musician ever to play acoustic steel-string guitar with a flatpick. He influenced jazz guitar enormously and helped pave the path for giants such as Charlie Christian and Wes Montgomery. Blues, rock and country guitarists from Chet Atkins to Jimi Hendrix to Les Paul freely acknowledged their debt to Reinhardt's genius.

Among flatpickers, Doc Watson and Clarence White cited Django as a big influence; indeed, many of Clarence's signature licks derive from Django's intricate syncopations, arpeggio runs, and frequent use of open strings to create what we flatpickers now call "floaties." In the 1970s, mandolinist David Grisman, working closely with flatpicking icon Tony Rice, created his own style of "dawg music" that incorporated much of Django's swing innovations with bluegrass and other styles. Indeed, Grisman and Rice even recorded the Reinhardt/Grappelli standard "Minor Swing" for the DGQ's debut CD, opening an entire new world of possibilities to

flatpicking guitarists eager to move beyond the I-IV-V progressions commonly found in bluegrass.

Today, the gypsy swing sound pioneered by Django Reinhardt, Stephane Grappelli, and le Quintette du Hot Club de France reverberates around the globe. Hot Club-style bands perform and record Gypsy jazz throughout North America, Europe, Scandinavia, Japan, and elsewhere. Aspiring Gypsy jazz players now have a wealth of instructional material enlightening them on the basic concepts and repertoire of the style. Numerous luthiers today recreate the great Selmer guitars used by Reinhardt and his cohorts, reproducing their plinky, nasal-toned lead sound and percussive rhythm guitar honk, just as luthiers lovingly craft faithful replicas of the great Martin and Gibson flattops of the 1930s and '40s. At the annual Gypsy jazz music festival in Samois sur Seine, the small town outside Paris where Reinhardt retired until his untimely death in 1953, Gypsy swing musicians of all stripes convene in a scene that would be familiar to longtime Winfield denizens as they sit 'round smoky campfires, pass bottles of cognac and brandy, and play wild Gypsy melodies at breakfinger tempos till dawn.

All this from an illiterate man born into a tribe of social and economic outcasts who had to relearn how to play guitar after a disastrous fire left him with the full use of only two fingers and the thumb on his fretting hand. Born in January 1910 in Liverchies Belgium, Jean Baptiste Reinhardt lived the true Gypsy life, traveling around Europe by caravan in a rootless existence. Music served as the lifeblood of his community. Nearly everyone played or sang or danced, and young Gypsies were surrounded by strong examples of great musicianship. Django, though, was seen as special right from the start. Taller, more imposing and intelligent than his peers, he showed astonishing musical proficiency from a young age. By 12, he was a featured player on banjo-guitar, backing up the violinists and accordionists of the region on the popular music of the day, mostly tangos and waltzes. By the time he was 18, he'd begun recording, starting a career that would include hundreds of sessions and as many as 1,000 recorded pieces at the time of his death. His future as a successful commercial musician seemed assured.

But on the fateful night of November 2, 1928, Django returned home after playing in Paris and entered the wooden caravan wagon he occupied with his wife, who made artificial flowers from highly flammable celluloid. During the night, a flame ignited the combustible materials, engulfing the wagon in flames almost immediately. Django dragged himself and his wife through the fire to safety, but suffered extensive burns all over his left hand and other areas. Taken to a nearby hospital, the doctors told Django his only choice was amputation, but the strong-willed Gypsy with a deep distrust of gadjo doctors refused stubbornly. He fled the hospital and sought help from a Gypsy healer to mend his burns. Scar tissue forced his third and fourth fingers into a permanent hook, making them useless except to finger the upper notes of some chords on the E and B strings. For a year and a half, he fought every day to stretch burned tissues, rebuild calluses and restore muscle memory to his hand and recuperate from his other injuries.

As he recovered, he slowly resumed his musical career playing with his brother Joseph and his cousins in the bars and cafes of rural France. Around this time, he also received his first exposure to American jazz music, hearing imported 78 rpm records of Louis Armstrong, violinist Joe Venuti, and others. Possessing an exceptionally keen ear and quick musical mind, Django usually could hear a tune once and repeat it immediately back on his guitar. Excited by the new sounds, he began incorporating the music he heard from American artists into his own playing, experimenting with a unique guitar style that allowed him to solo over jazz chord changes. But this was only for fun; to earn a living he continued playing the popular music of the day.

But by the early 1930s, jazz was becoming the popular music of witty, sophisticated, urbane Paris. American jazz musicians, who received a less-than-regal treatment at home, traveled to France where music fans showered them with accolades. One center of this new musical phenomenon was the famous Hot Club of France, and Django was drawn to the emerging scene like a moth to a Gypsy candle flame. Another musician, one as different as could be, also felt the compelling pull of jazz. Stephane Grappelli was everything Django could never be: well-educated, literate and sophisticated. But Grappelli proved to be the perfect foil for the mercurial, undependable guitarist. Together, they would start a revolution still reverberating today.

At the center was the Hot Club, which was not, in fact, a bar or night club, but an association of jazz aficionados eager to promote this wild new music to a Parisian audience. Led by impresario Pierre Nourry, the Hot Club existed as a series of hot jam sessions that included the hottest jazz musicians in France at that time. Originally built around a "house band" of American musicians led by pianist Freddy Johnson, Nourry's Hot Club of France was thrown off course when Johnson decided to return to Harlem. Already familiar with Reinhardt's genius on guitar, Nourry brought the young musician into the recording studio to lay down three tunes. Copies were sent to

Photo courtesy Mike Peters

Photo courtesy Mike Peters

leading jazz critics in Europe and to John Hammond (who had discovered Benny Goodman, Count Basie, and Billie Holliday, among others). The reception, however, proved negative to the unique new string-based jazz music.

Despite the setback, Django and his mates still found work in Paris. Bassist Louis Volas, who had played for years with Django, had put together a 14-piece house band for a hotel ballroom in Paris that included Django and Joseph Reinhardt, as well as Grappelli. The two future superstars had encountered one another at times, but had never had the opportunity to play together before.

One day, when Grappelli was backstage with Reinhardt, the duo began improvising on the pop standard "Dinah," with spectacular results. Soon they were performing as a full quintet, but discovered a serious bias against their music. Without any American musicians in the band, many French fans refused to accept their music as true jazz; fans of traditional music found their hard-swinging, harmonically complex arrangements too modern and discordant. Still, Nourry pressed his vision of a successful European jazz act, eventually landing them a recording deal with the Ultraphone label. In December of 1934, the group arrived at a recording studio with producer Charles Delauney, who would go on to write the definitive Django biography in later years. Django, irrepressibly late as always, showed up with just 90 minutes of studio time left for the session. Hastily tuning and preparing, the group launched into their best material, including "Dinah," "Tiger Rag," "Lady Be Good," and others. Despite its hasty preparation, the record proved a sensation. Two months later, the band, now officially known as the Quintette of the Hot Club of France, opened for American jazz star Coleman Hawkins and practically stole the show. Django's Gypsy jazz had arrived.

The group succeeded beyond even Nourry's expectations, creating a sensational form of jazz music never heard before. The Quintette toured Europe, England, and elsewhere, igniting guitarists and jazz fans into a frenzy at every stop. No one had ever imagined acoustic guitar could be so forceful and incendiary before. In addition to his obvious skills as an improvising guitarist, Reinhardt also proved himself a consummate composer. He and Grappelli crafted dozens of serenely swinging melodies that the group quickly recorded. Until 1939, the Quintette was the toast of Europe, playing to royalty and selling its albums even in far-away America, the home of jazz.

But the coming of the war caused a split that was never healed, with Grappelli escaping to England to flee Nazi tyranny and Django staying behind in Paris. Although the Gypsies were systematically persecuted and exterminated in the notorious Nazi death camps, Reinhardt's genius was so great even his captors treated him as a star and allowed him the freedom to play and record during the war. At war's end, the two musicians reunited, but the magical spirit between them had dimmed. Grappelli, by most accounts, wanted to continue playing the smooth swing style that so suited his silky, legato violin improvisations, but Django had other ideas. Exposed to American bebop during his only trip to the United States in 1947 to tour with Duke Ellington, he had become increasingly fascinated with the intricate, demanding improvisations and restless, unpredictable chord changes pioneered by Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and other top American jazz musicians.

A true artist driven by a restless need to create new sounds, Django rebelled at the restraints placed on him by fans, club owners and record companies who only wanted to hear the "old" Django. He experimented with electric guitar, bringing his unique sense of syncopation and phrasing to that instrument. But eventually, he retired to a rented house in Samois sur Seine, a little town 30 miles south of Paris where he lived out his days playing billiards, fly fishing, and playing music mostly for his own amusement. He made his final recordings in March 1953. Two months later, he left home to visit the local tavern and suffered what later was determined to be a brain hemorrhage. His friends carried him to a nearby hospital, but he died. One of the greatest of all lights in improvisational music, a genius every bit the equal of jazz greats such as Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, and Wes Montgomery, was gone.

Django's Playing

Some writers have argued that Django's physical handicap actually made him a better guitarist than had he the use of all four fingers on his fretting hand. As John Hartford proved when he sang, "It's just my style and style is based on limitation," there's probably more than a grain of truth to this theory. Unable to play the linear, scale-driven lines that fall all too easily under the fingers of most guitarists, Django's limited mobility forced him to view the fingerboard more vertically than horizontally. Blessed with exceptionally large hands and long fingers (one famous

photo shows him fretting the high E through A strings of his guitar at the 14th fret with his middle finger from the second knuckle down), he had the strength and stretch to make wide intervals with just his first two fingers. He invented the use of octave runs as a soloing device on guitar, another example of taking his two-fingered limitation and making it a musical asset. Moving beyond that, he frequently used double stop runs in colorful intervals to generate tonal tension and resolution in his solos. Django literally developed a new vocabulary for lead guitar, making wide interval jumps across the strings as often as he moved up and down the strings individually. When he did remain on one string, it was typically for a blistering chromatic run that might start on the first fret and run all the way up to the 13th fret. Always aware of the slightest nuance of tone, Django honed each note perfectly, often incorporating a beautifully modulated finger vibrato or a skillfully executed blues bend or slur to add emotional strength to his playing. As the Django repertoire books written by guitarist Robin Nolan show clearly, most of Django's chord positions were simple three note chords, but his musical genius enabled him to create diminished, suspended and augmented chords that beautifully fit the melodies he played by adding open string notes as needed. Although a total illiterate musically who couldn't name any chords, he always knew what chord formation he needed to create the musical effect he desired, either a sweet, lush chord or a jarring, angular punctuation chord, to set the mood.

A tireless worker, he endlessly developed a trailblazing right hand technique, as well. Django was the first to frequently utilize what is now called sweep picking, where a run is played with the pick pushing through three or more strings sequentially with either a down or upstroke. His tremolo rivaled that of the great Italian mandolin virtuosi, a skill that he utilized on full chords and well as individual notes to great effect. Django preferred the thickest, stiffest picks he could find, generally using natural tortoise shell. But he never let his equipment dominate his creative skills. Delauney's book, for instance, cites one example where he showed up for a gig without a pick and proceeded to break off the tooth of a comb and used that as a substitute plectrum for the night!

Django's Recordings

Unlike other greats such as Charlie Christian who were tragically under-recorded, Django left an astounding recorded legacy. Sources attribute anywhere from 750 to 1,000 recorded tunes to him. Sorting through that morass of material is nearly impossible, with many popular tunes like "Dinah" being recorded on many sessions with different backup musicians. In addition, many record labels have issued and reissued numerous Django "collections," making it difficult to avoid duplication in a collection. One great place for the neophyte to start is the five-CD set from JSP Records. Incorporating all the Quintette's recordings chronologically from 1934 through 1937, this set includes 124 cuts covering such great Hot Club original tunes as "Blue Drag," "Djangology," "Daphne," "HCQ Strut," "Appel Direct," "Swing '39," "Oriental Shuffle," "Swing Guitars," "Sweet Chorus," "Tears" and "Mystery Pacific" as well as dozens of jazz standards like "Limehouse Blues," "Avalon," "Sweet Georgia Brown" and many more. Amazon.com sells this great set for around $25—a total bargain. With so many great CDs out there, it's impossible to narrow down too many other selections. One of the great pleasures of Django is searching out unusual recordings and finding rare gems, such as his appearance with the Air Force's American Swing Big Band, captured on the CD *Swing Guitar* (Jass Records J-CD 628). Hear Django riff through "Moten Swing" with a full big band behind him for a great example of the man's versatility and command.

Django on the Web

Of course, these days anything you want can be found on the Web, and there's plenty of great Django material, including MP3s of many recordings and even some limited film footage of his playing. The best place to start is the Django Reinhardt Swing Page (http://www.hotclub.co.uk/), which includes historical articles on the man and the musicians around him, great photos, a wonderful instruction section, and numerous links to other sites containing info on Django and other Gypsy swing musicians. Another couple of popular links are (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gypsyjazzguitar), the popular Gypsy jazz guitar newsgroup on yahoo.com and (http://www.about-django.com/), although a simple Google search will turn up thousands of hits for Django.

Django's Impact on Flatpickers

As previously stated, even the earliest flatpickers like Doc Watson and especially

Photo courtesy Mike Peters

Stephane Grappelli and Django Reinhardt

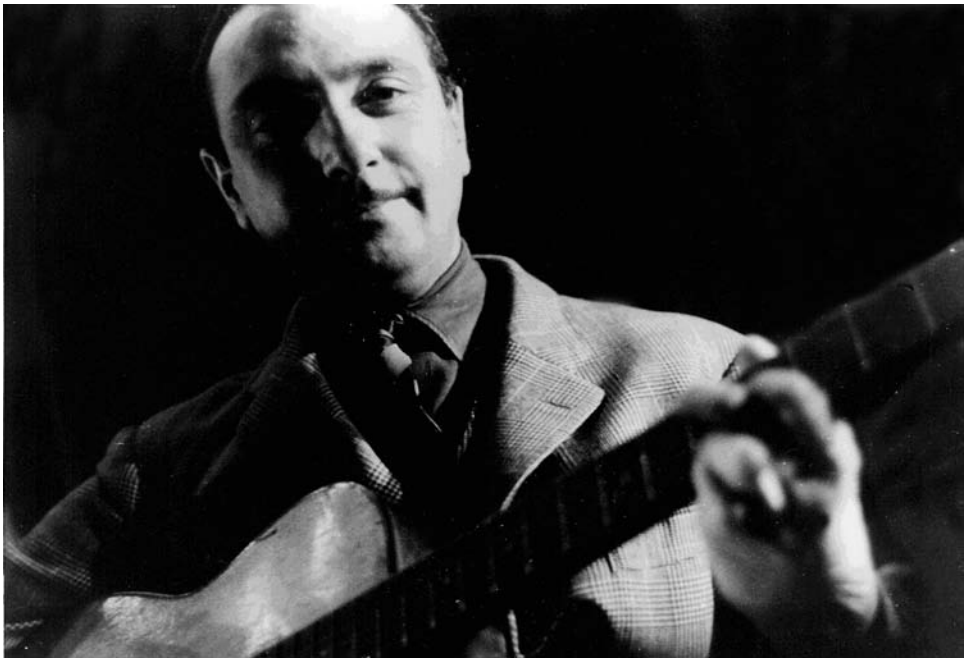


Photo courtesy Mike Peters

Clarence White drew inspiration from Django's recordings. In many ways, Gypsy jazz is Europe's equivalent folk music to bluegrass: both have an unrivaled energy and vitality and utilize strong improvisational skills over relatively simple, repeated chord changes. Among modern players, Django's influence is easily seen. Bryan Sutton has been deeply bitten by the Django bug, as his version of Django's immortal "Minor Swing" on the *Ready To Go* CD shows. Other modern flatpickers, including Jack Lawrence, Curtis Jones, David Grier, Roy Curry, Jeff Autry, Robert Shafer, and others all show the Gypsy touch in their approach to flatpicking.

Learning Django's Style

With the worldwide revival of Gypsy-style jazz guitar, many fine instruction pieces now make Django's guitar style much more accessible and open to aspiring flatpickers. Three great video tapes are available. Paul Mehling, leader of the Quintet of the Hot Club of San Francisco (and profiled elsewhere in this issue), has a fantastic two-tape series on Homespun Tapes, *Django-style Gypsy Jazz Guitar*. The first tape covers the intricate rhythm guitar style, including Django's highly expressive right hand strumming patterns and his fluid chord changes. Tape Two covers lead guitar in the style of Django, artfully converting his two-fingered leads into patterns more suitable for four-fingered guitarists. When it comes to learning this thrilling style of guitar playing, in my opinion, Mehling's series is the best instruction material available. Paul tells me he's hoping to persuade Homespun to let him record a third tape focusing on Django's incredible right hand technique.

Two other videos deserve attention, as well. Ian Cruickshank has studied Django's guitar style for decades, and has produced several outstanding books described below. His video for Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop, *Gypsy Jazz Guitar*, packs a tremendous amount of material into a single 55 minute VHS tape. Cruickshank boils down Django's style through intense analysis, and his experience playing firsthand with the Gypsies who learned this style from Django directly gives this video tremendous credibility and authenticity.

Similar strengths are found in *Romane: The Gypsy Sound*, on Bransong Video. Although this is primarily a performance video by Romane, a classically trained French guitarist who has become one of the world's leading exponents of the Gypsy jazz style, there's also an excellent instruction section and accompanying tab book covering many essential elements of Django's sound and style.

In print, Cruickshank's great *The Guitar Style of Django Reinhardt and the Gypsies* was the first book to delve into the true heart of Django's guitar style. Although nowhere near as comprehensive as the Mehling series or Cruickshank's own video, the book still offers a good introduction. More recently, Robin Nolan and Paul Meader have produced a wonderful series of books that teach the Gypsy jazz repertoire, rather than focus solely on the guitar techniques used to play this fascinating style. The Nolan books also include play-along CDs where the student can hear Nolan play the melody one time through, then have his trio play backup while you solo along. The tunes reflect all the great Hot Club standards, including "Minor Swing," "Djangology," "Dark Eyes," "Swing 42" and many more. Check out Robin's website (www.robinnolantrio.com) for his books and his equally excellent CDs.

Romane has a good book on Mel Bay Publications, *Romane – Gypsy Jazz Guitar*. Mel Bay has also recently published Stan Ayeroff's new comprehensive study of Django's guitar style called *The Music of Django Reinhardt*. Other transcription books include: *Django Reinhardt Anthology* by Mike Peters, *The Genius of Django Reinhardt* published by the Goodman Group, and *A Treasury of Django Reinhardt Guitar Solos*, also published by Goodman.

Django Reinhardt Appreciation Society

A new organization, Club de Django is currently in the start-up phase. Once it is set in place, its goal will be to provide a periodic newsletter with items of interest, such as playing tips from leading performers, chord charts, tabulature, and information on new CDs, videos, and concert dates for Hot Club swing groups throughout the country for only a nominal membership fee.

The organizers have plans to keep a database of members so that it will be easy to find others in your area who are interested in Django's music. The possibility of an annual convention has also been discussed. If you are interested in receiving more information on this exciting new guitar society, please send a brief email to clubdedjango@hotmail.com with your name, address, phone number and/or email address.

The transcription we are providing for this issue is Django's arrangement of "Finesse." Paul Mehling transcribed this solo for us and provides the following notes:

Finesse (transcriber's notes)

In 1939 Django had the opportunity to play with some "real" (that is to say, American) jazz musicians from the Duke Ellington Orchestra—Rex Stewart on Trumpet, Barney Bigard on Clarinet, and Billy Taylor on bass. This session produced some very cool sides that proved (yet again) that Django was a true jazzman, with or without his Quintette du Hot Club

de France. In this issue we're studying Django's solo from one of the tunes from that day, "Finesse," written by Billy Taylor, a combination of I-vi-ii-V and the blues.

Studying solos of great players is the best way to learn any style, gypsy-swing included. I've selected this piece for introducing the beginner, as well as the advanced player, to some of the tricks (in French—les trucs) of the Reinhardt repertoire.

Right from the start of this solo we get a soulful bend of the flatted fifth up to the natural fifth and then back down to the flatted note, continuing down to the fourth degree of the C scale. From there Django outlines the very "gypsy" sounding D half-diminished chord (also known as the D minor 7 flat 5, or for you advanced thinkers—the Bflat 9 chord without the Bflat!—more on that in following columns, stay tuned!) This chord is not necessarily in the tune—a rather daring color to add (this is the art of chord substitution) to an already beautiful tune. This chord functions as a ii chord in the I-vi-ii-V chord scheme. In the key of C that means, I = C (major), vi= A minor, ii=D minor and V= G7.

If this is Greek to you at this point, don't give up! We'll get you comfortable with all this in the coming issues, for now just keep reading and listening and most importantly-thinking about these new sounds and the words to describe them.

The solo continues with a half-step below the chord tone of G to the note G which is the root of the chord at that point in the tune—G7. How simple the thinking behind that choice of notes! Sometimes chord tones are the best notes to pick, but how you pick them is key! In this case, Django has approached the G note from below with a Gflat, going to the G and then when the chord changes to C, he plays a G again, only it's an octave higher! Chromatic approach from a half-step below is very Django. As you play through this solo, and memorize it, keep your eyes peeled for other instances of this device.

Another device Django would use to great effect is the chromatic run—namely playing 3 or more notes in a row, which are half-steps apart. You know what a scale is, and hopefully you also know that an arpeggio is (every-other note of a scale, also known as the chord tones of the scale, you're playing). Well, all the notes between the scale notes are the chromatic notes, or the notes one fret in either direction from the note you just played. In measure 6 Django plays a descending chromatic slide (or glissando) from A to F sharp which is done with one finger sliding backwards on the A string at the 12th fret to the 9th. Try to get all four notes to sound! (Incidentally, those of you who have studied my Homespun video on Django-Style lead playing may recognize this as the opening phrase to Reinhardt's solo on "I'll See You In My Dreams.")

Photo courtesy François Charle

The Quintette du Hot Club de France with, from left to right, Stephane Grappelli, Joseph Reinhardt, Django Reinhardt, Louis Vola, and Pierre Baro Ferret

This "gliss" leads to yet another very typical Django device—the diminished arpeggio. The phrase finishes with a diminshed arpeggio that ends with a trill.

Another trill in measure 8 followed by a nice C7 flat 5 arpeggio—very simple, yet very tasty!

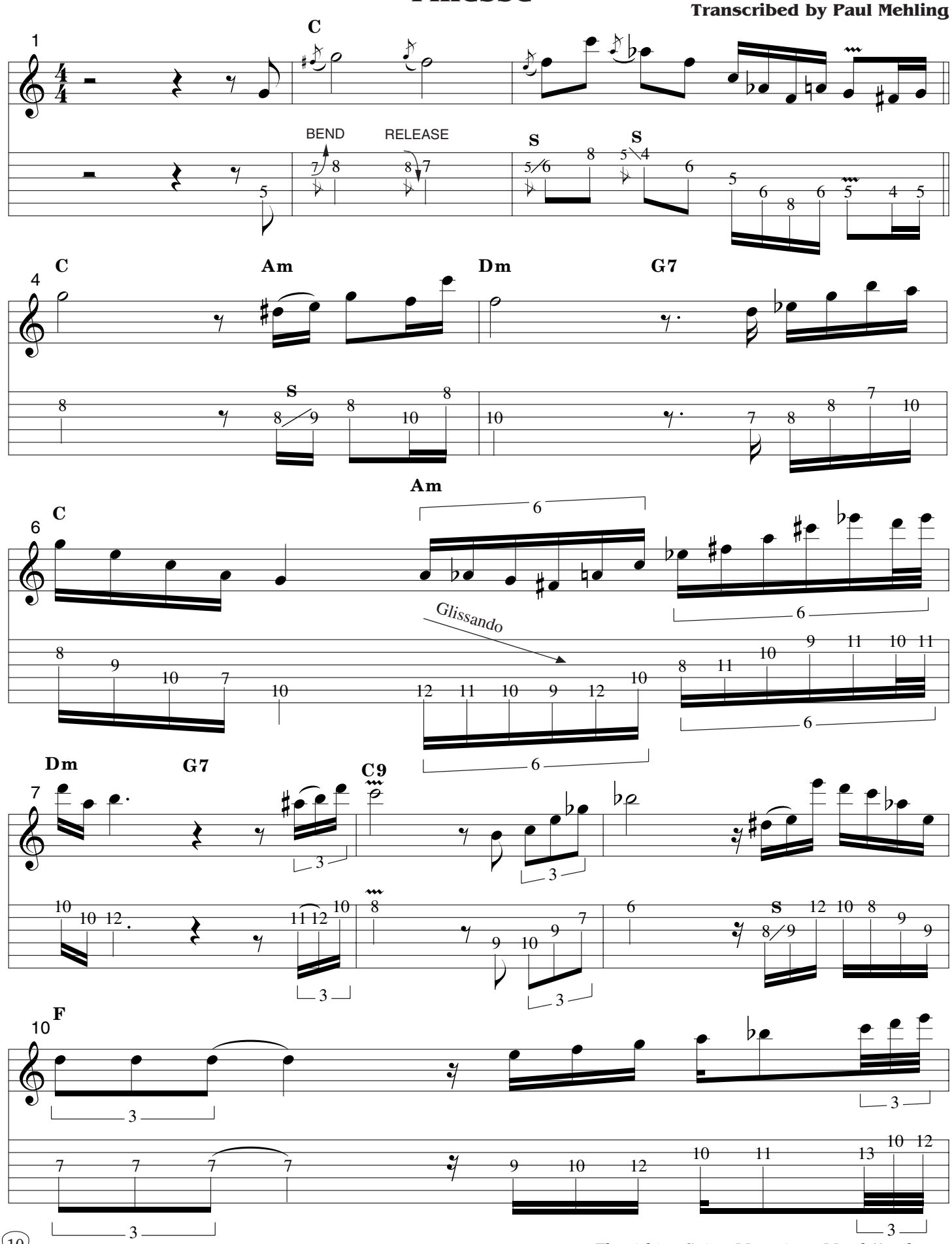
Then another arpeggio, this one outlining a four chord in minor (iv), F minor in the key of C. He plays the E natural, which is a major 7 on the F minor—very daring, almost like Bix Biederbeck—then he plays the note D on top of the F minor. This is the 6th degree of the F chord and is one of the most evocative chords in the gypsy-swing genre.

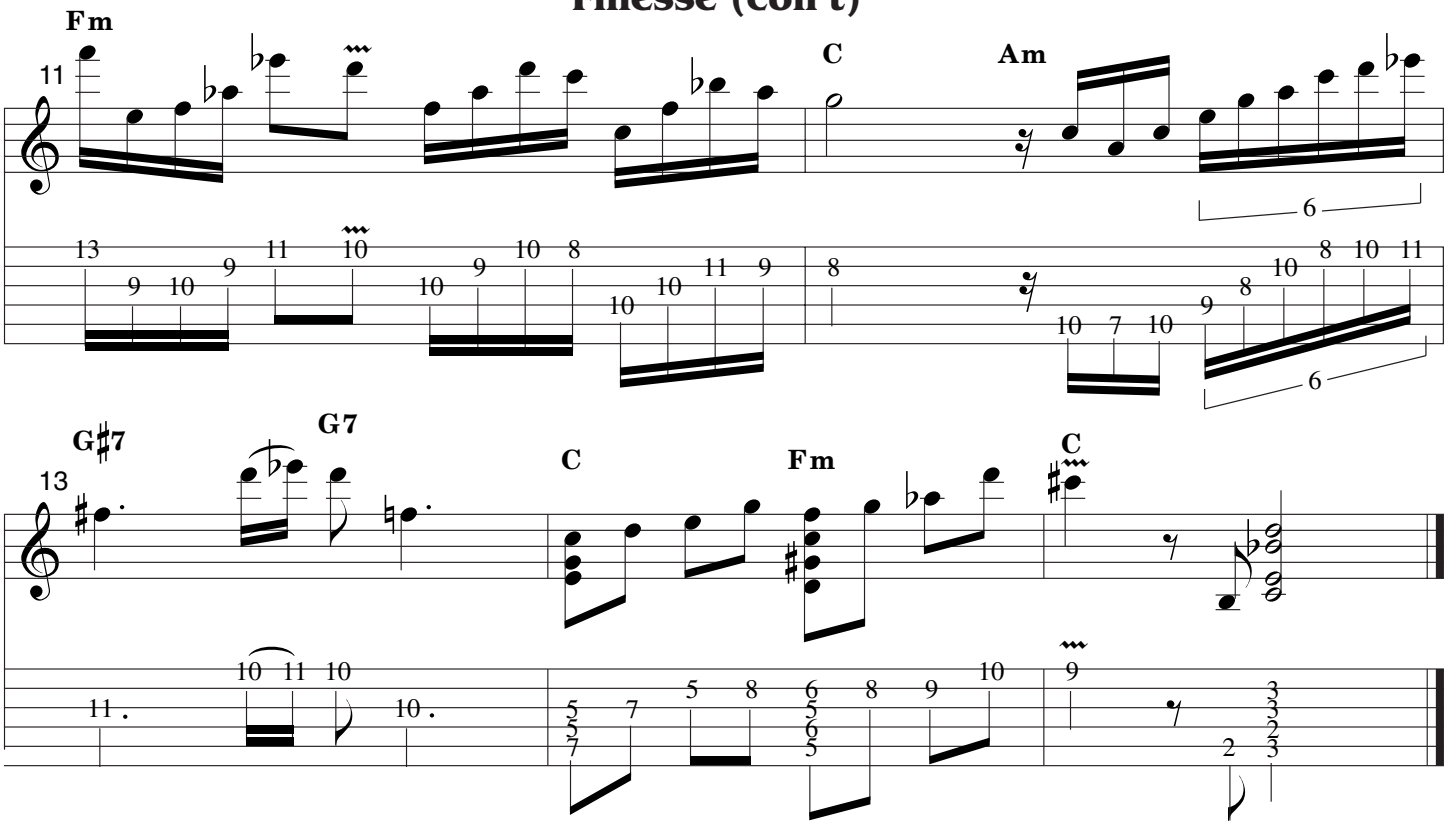
Familiarity with the sound, the uses, and the emotional impact of the minor 6th chord is one of the keys to unlocking the mysteries of Django's sound. Django finishes this phrase by playing the note D (the 6 of the F minor 6 chord) not once but three times! Then a simple F major scale, starting on E natural going to a high F is next. Simple? You bet, but check out the rhythm of the phrasing! Never underestimate the power of rhythm, either in soloing or in accompaniment! One of the most common mistakes of improvising is to prioritize the pitches of the notes over the rhythms. Absolutely essential. Rhythm.

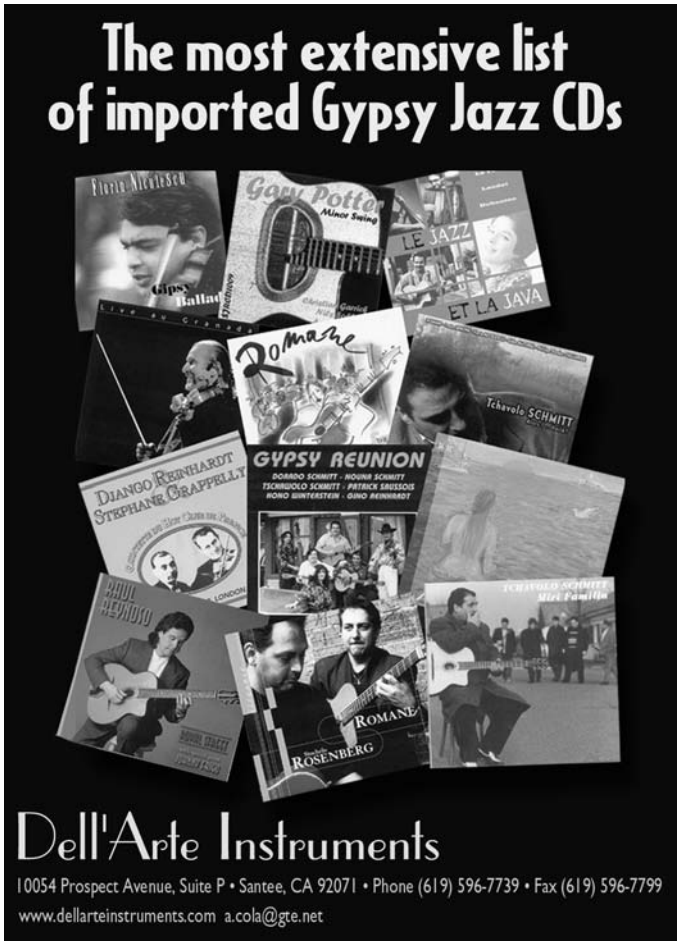
Next time you listen to any jazz solo, see if you can just concentrate on the rhythms being generated by the soloist. That's what swing is all about. Measures 9 and 10 outline the F minor 6 chord again, this time with a chromatic approach tone from above. Usually, when this is done it's the scale tones that determine half or whole-steps. (In contrast to the chromatic-approach from below the target notes, which is usually a half-step regardless of the scale tones.) The closing chord sequence is a favorite of both Django and Stephane Grappelli's (the violinist with the Hot Club de France), namely I-iv-I (C-Fm6-C) with the same melody.

To whet your appetite for next month's column I'll give you a teaser—the Fm6 has the same notes in it that the D half-diminished from measure one, how can that be?

Finesse

Arranged by Django Reinhardt
Transcribed by Paul Mehling

Finesse (con't)

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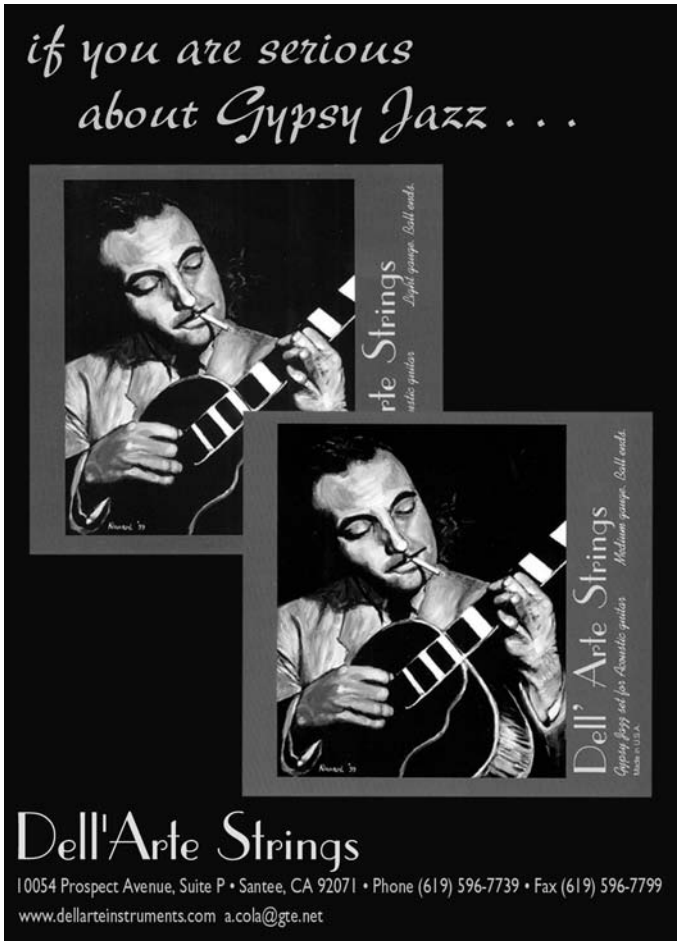
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Django's Heirs: Contemporary Gypsy Jazz

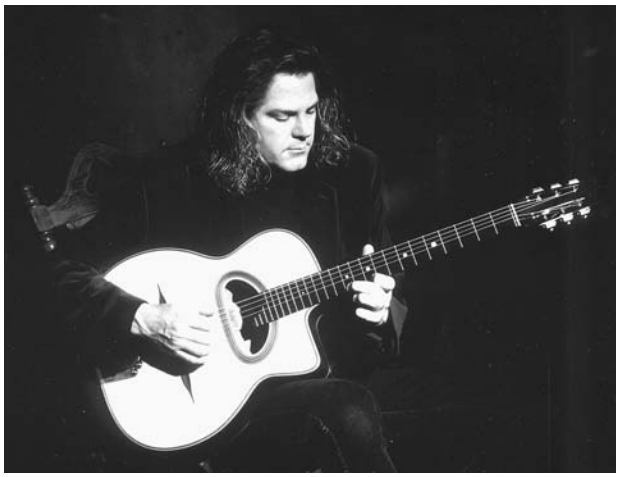
By David McCarty

Much like Bill Monroe's bluegrass music now reverberates through such unlikely locales as Japan, Czechoslovakia and Norway, the Gypsy jazz sound pioneered by Django Reinhardt has captured a growing worldwide audience. Hot Club bands play in clubs and concert halls around the world, and the music that once captivated Europe now holds converts around the globe.

In recent years, a new generation of Django-inspired musicians has emerged, often expanding upon the boundaries of the music to create new, exciting sounds. In the U.S., John Jorgenson, former guitarist with Elton John and the Desert Rose Band, was an early convert. He released a stunning LP (later reissued on CD) in the 1980s called *After You're Gone*. On the first side he played Django style guitar and on the other, he recreated the sound of the Benny Goodman Quintet with Jorgenson playing both Charlie Christian's electric guitar parts and Goodman's swinging clarinet style. If you can find that CD, I highly recommend it.

Other West Coast luminaries include Raul Reynoso, who played guitar with banjo great Larry McNeely and has now immersed himself in the Gypsy jazz style. His self-produced CD, *Royal Street*, offers 13 tunes, including his great original, "Matelot," (recently covered by former Winfield champion Robert Shafer on his latest CD, *Watch Your Step)*. Reynoso is a model clean, lyrical, melodic Gypsy swing guitar, and I hope he records again soon.

Farther up the coast, the Bay Area has been a prolific scene for all types of acoustic music, and for Gypsy jazz in particular. Paul Mehling, (profiled elsewhere in this issue) leads the renowned Hot Club of San Francisco, and is a formidable teacher and video instructor in the Django style. The HCSF has five CDs out, available on their excellent website at www.hcsf.com. A superb composer, Mehling has crafted many great original tunes and also brilliantly adapts other material to the Reinhardt tradition. On the latest CD, a live recording called *Claire de Lune*, he creates a Gypsy jazz version of guitarist Pat Metheny's modern jazz classic, "James" that sounds as if it came straight from the 1930s.



John Jorgenson

Raul Reynoso

Frank Vignola

Still further north, one encounters the strikingly original Pearl Django (www.pearldjango.com), which includes former bluegrass flatpicker Dudley Hill, who now plays big-band archtop guitar. With four CDs out under their own name and several others as collaborators, Pearl Django has created a strong audience for Gypsy jazz throughout the Pacific Northwest. The band also helped develop and promote a Gypsy jazz festival at Whidbey Island, Washington, last year. Rhythm guitarist Shelley Park also is one of the finest luthiers building Selmer-style guitars in the world today.

Many other U.S. artists contribute to a growing Gypsy jazz scene. Jorgenson plays with Bryan Sutton and 2001 Winfield champ Richard Smith in the Hot Club of Nashville. Fiddler Mark O'Connor came under the spell of Reinhardt partner Stephane Grappelli with the two violinists played together on tour with David Grisman in the 1980s. O'Connor now performs regularly in a Gypsy swing trio with former Grappelli bassist John Burr and NYC guitarist Frank Vignola. Although not strictly a Django-style player, Whit Smith plays superbly on a 1920s Gibson L5 in the Austin-based Hot Club of Cowtown. In Madison, Wisconsin, Harmonious Wail (www.wail.com) not only keeps the swing tradition alive, they've helped introduced the Amsterdam-based Robin Nolan Trio to American audiences.

In the New York area, guitarist Frank Vignola is one of the jazz masters closely allied with the Django

legacy. In addition to his work with O'Connor and their brilliant CD, *Hot Swing!*, Vignola has released numerous CDs on his own and has his own Hot Club-style group, Hot Club USA. Most recently, he's released a thoroughly brilliant CD of solo Gypsy jazz guitar—*Blues for a Gypsy*— on David Grisman's Acoustic Disc label. This is guitar virtuosity at its highest level, a must-hear CD for anyone who appreciates this style.

Cross the Atlantic to the British Isles, and Django's music has always been popular. Guitarist Martin Taylor toured for ten years with Grappelli, releasing several CDs with the master violinist before striking out on his own. Perhaps the most accomplished jazz guitarist in the world today, Taylor can play any style and has recorded with David Grisman and many others. On his own, Taylor currently plays and records with a Hot Club style band called Spirit of Django that offers some very unique interpretations of classic Django material. Listen to their Latin syncopated version of "Minor Swing" from their debut CD to see how original this music can be.

Another relatively unknown British guitar with a rare gift is Gary Potter, who has released several solo CDs showcasing his acoustic and electric renditions of classic Hot Club material. Ian Cruickshank, author of several books on the Django style, also records under his own name and has several good CDs out. He also promotes an annual Gypsy jazz guitar festival and releases live CDs from these performances. British guitarist and journalist Andy Mackenzie covers the Gypsy jazz guitar scene for *Just Jazz Guitar* magazine and has a fine CD out, *Tales From The Hot Club*, that also features John Jorgenson.

In Europe, of course, great Gypsy jazz abounds. Stochelo Rosenberg of the Rosenberg Trio is considered by many to be the best of the best today, but there are literally dozens of great European musicians touring and recording superb CDs in this style today. In Amsterdam, the Robin Nolan Trio (www.rnt.com) melds Latin jazz, swing and Django sounds into a unique style. One marvelous

Paul Mehling & The Hot Club of SF

Pearl Django

Photo courtesy François Charle

The Rosenberg Trio

Photo courtesy Alain Cola

Jimmy Rosenberg

recent CD of theirs, *Nat Meets Django*, features an American jazz singer doing Nat King Cole classics to the sound of a Hot Club band. Great stuff!

Romane, a classically trained guitarist turned Djangophile, plays especially delightful Gypsy jazz. His latest solo CD, *Samois-sur-Seine*, includes duets with Django's son Babik as well as the brilliant guitarist Angelo Debarre. Romane also has a duet CD with Stochelo Rosenberg out, *Elegance*, that pairs two of the best in a delightful session.

Stochelo's young cousin, Jimmy Rosenberg, is another huge talent. A founding member of the Gypsy swing band Sinti, Jimmy is well-known at the annual Samois festival and has recorded extensively on his own and with Jon Larsen's Hot Club of Norway. Another player credited as being not only technically superb but supremely musical is Tchavolo Schmitt, composer of the modern Gypsy swing classic Tchavolo Swing. His most recent CD, *Alors?…Voila!* is filled with great material and inspired playing.

Another brilliant improviser is Raphael Fays. I was less than impressed with his *Gypsy Voyages* CD, but his newer release, *En Concert*, will blow you away with his speed and musical exploration on the fingerboard. Other great European-based players include Fapy Lafertin, Boulou Ferre, and the young German, Joscho Stephan, who plays Django style with the sweet tone and gifted ear of Kenny Smith's perfect flatpicking.

Of course, this list is only intended as an introduction to the modern heirs to Django's grand legacy. Take the time to explore the web, look up CDs on amazon.com and the new www.dellarteinstruments.com website, and follow the Gypsy jazz discussion group on yahoo.com for more detail information on this growing scene. For flatpickers eager to expand their technical skills and explore new dimensions of musical expression, there's an entire universe of astounding flatpicked acoustic guitar music to discover.

Somewhere Over The Rainbow

by Craig Vance

Here's a melody that almost everyone has heard, and filed away in the "familiar melodies" area of the brain.

Back in the early 80s, banjoist Chris Leske and I worked up a duet of "Somewhere Over The Rainbow," and it became one of the pieces that helps Chris to win the nationals at Winfield in 1984. To this day The McKrells continue to include it in our sets, and have a version of it on our *Live* CD. It's a guaranteed crowd pleaser, and a great tune to use as a floating set saver. If you are playing a slow ballad and the attention of the audience becomes somewhat disabled, toss this in, and you've got them right back in the palm of your hand.

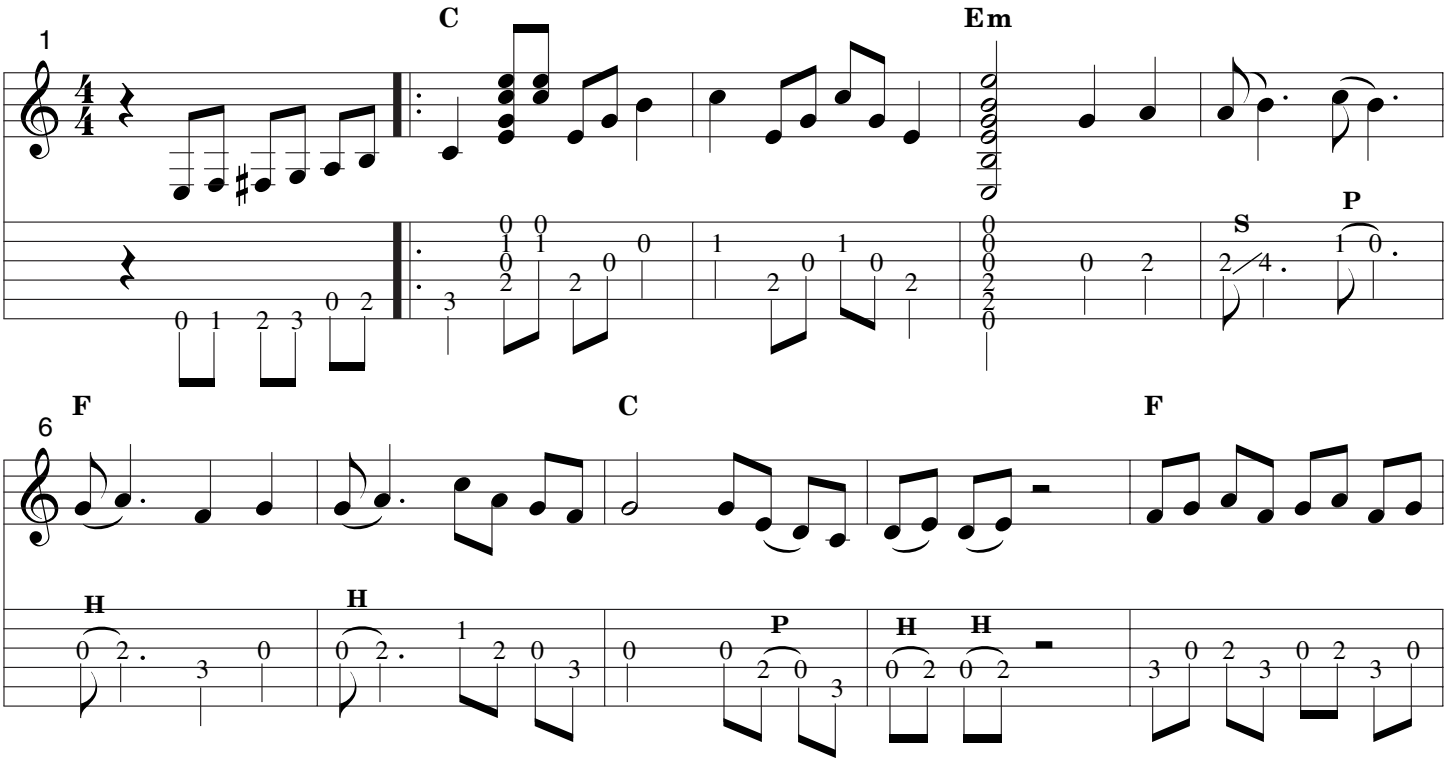
The arrangement that I have tabbed out here is probably something that the composers Harold Arlin and E.Y. Harburg would have never imagined happening to this piece. Heck, back in those days it was still pretty rare for a guitar player to provide anything beyond rhythm.

Anyway, note that there are many filler strums over the presiding chords. The melody is loaded with gaps, so these fillers apply. I'm sure that there is a way to note the heck out of this tune, but it would inevitably swallow the melody. We can't have that…and Judy Garland certainly would not have that.

In this case, simple is very good.

Somewhere Over The Rainbow

Arranged by Craig Vance



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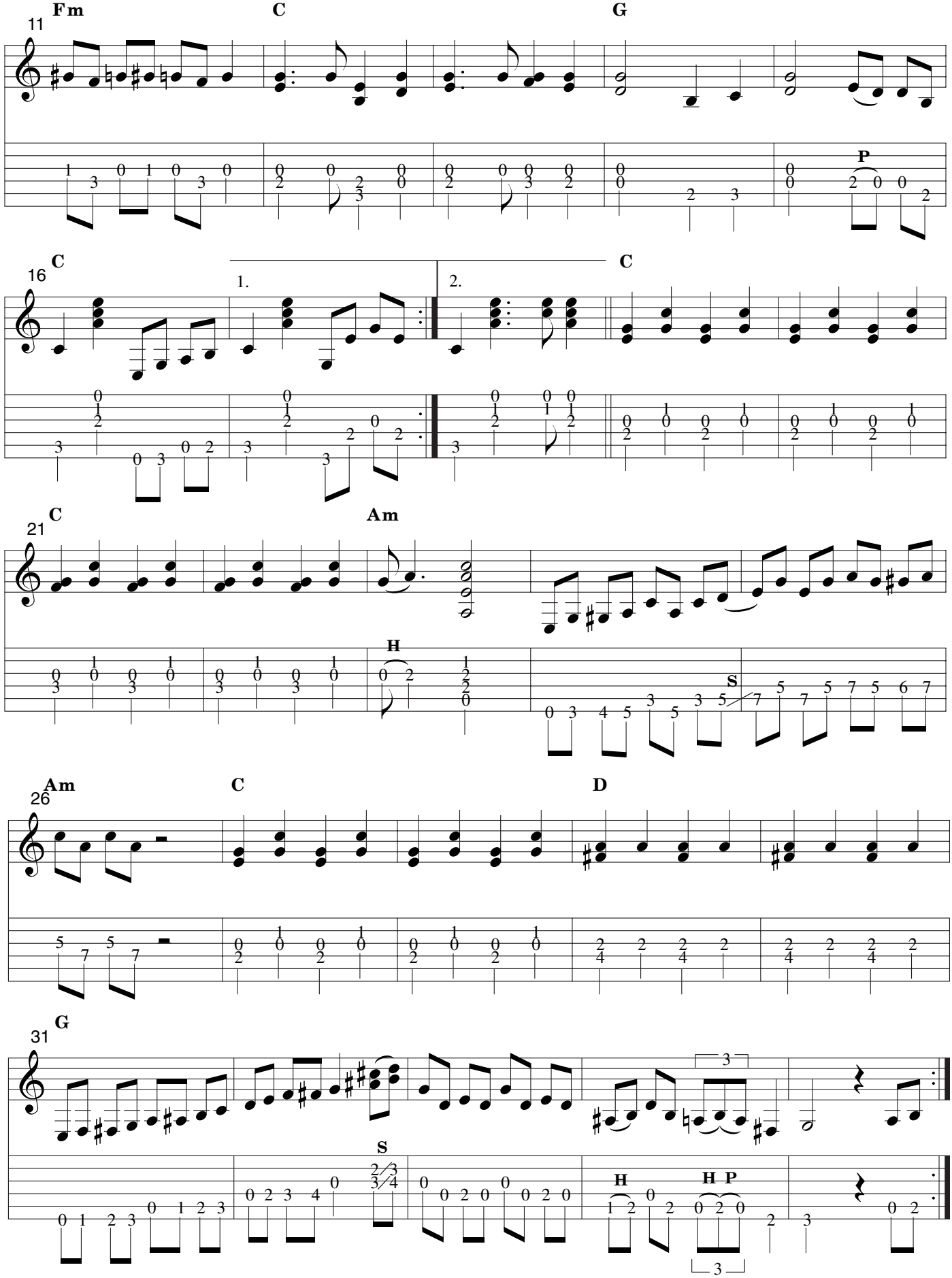
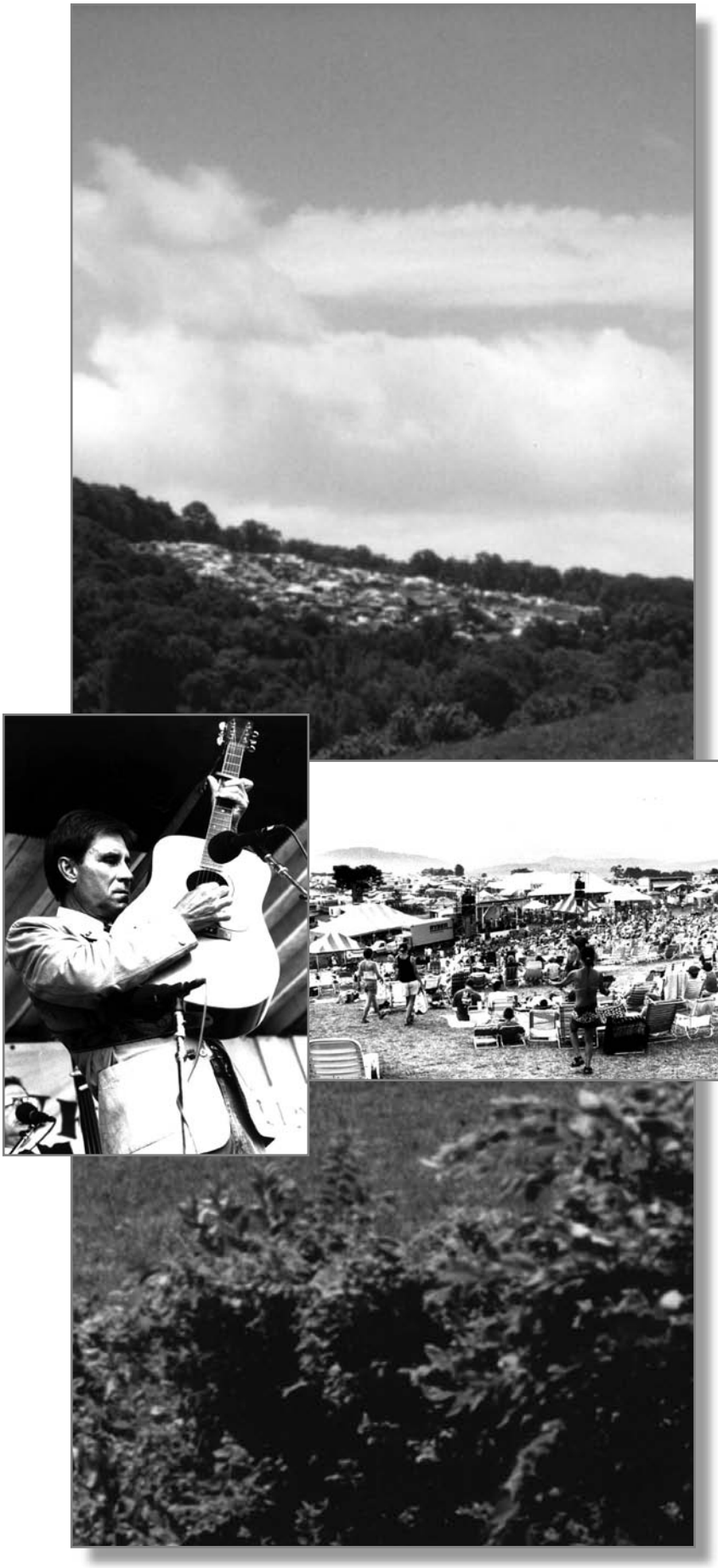

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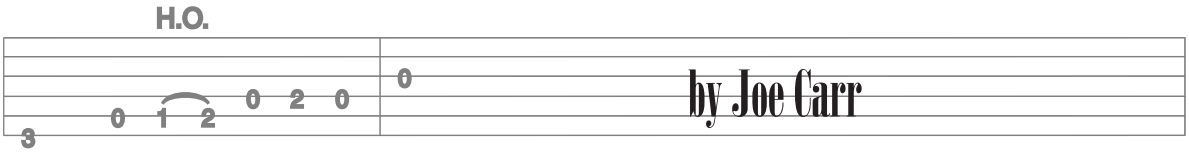

by Joe Carr

"Tea For Two" Django Reinhardt Guitar Solo

This issue's column doesn't deal with rhythm, but it does include lots of chords! Django recorded numerous arrangements for solo guitar during his career including "Tea For Two." The arrangement below is my take on Django, using ideas from his 1937 Paris recording. Notice that by using full chords and arpeggios woven around single melody notes, Django creates a full sounding arrangement that conveys both melody and harmony.

This arrangement is designed to be quite fluid rhythmically. In other words, feel free to speed up and slow down where you desire. The introduction is played considerably slower than the actual tune which begins at measure 9. The formatas or "bird's eyes" in measures 2 and 4 are places where you should pause for effect. The indicated chords are for analysis and not necessarily accompaniment.

Highlights: The introduction begins with a 4 bar 1, b3dim, 2-, 5 progression which is repeated. The two measure descending augmented run leads to the beginning of the song at measure 8. The arrangement then proceeds more or less as expected until measure17, where Django shifts the tonal center of the piece for four measures. The series of 9th chords in measure 31 sets up the ending phrase. The harmonics in measure 32 are played at the 7th and 5th frets as indicated. The diminished shaped chords in measures 34 and 35 could be analyzed as either 7b9 or diminished. The ending, beginning in measure 39, is played much slower than the body of the piece.

Work this up and you'll have a great tune when one of the band members breaks a string. **Source:** *Djangologie/USA*, Disques Swing, DRG Records International, 1988, CDSW8424/5, 8425/6.

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Tea for Two

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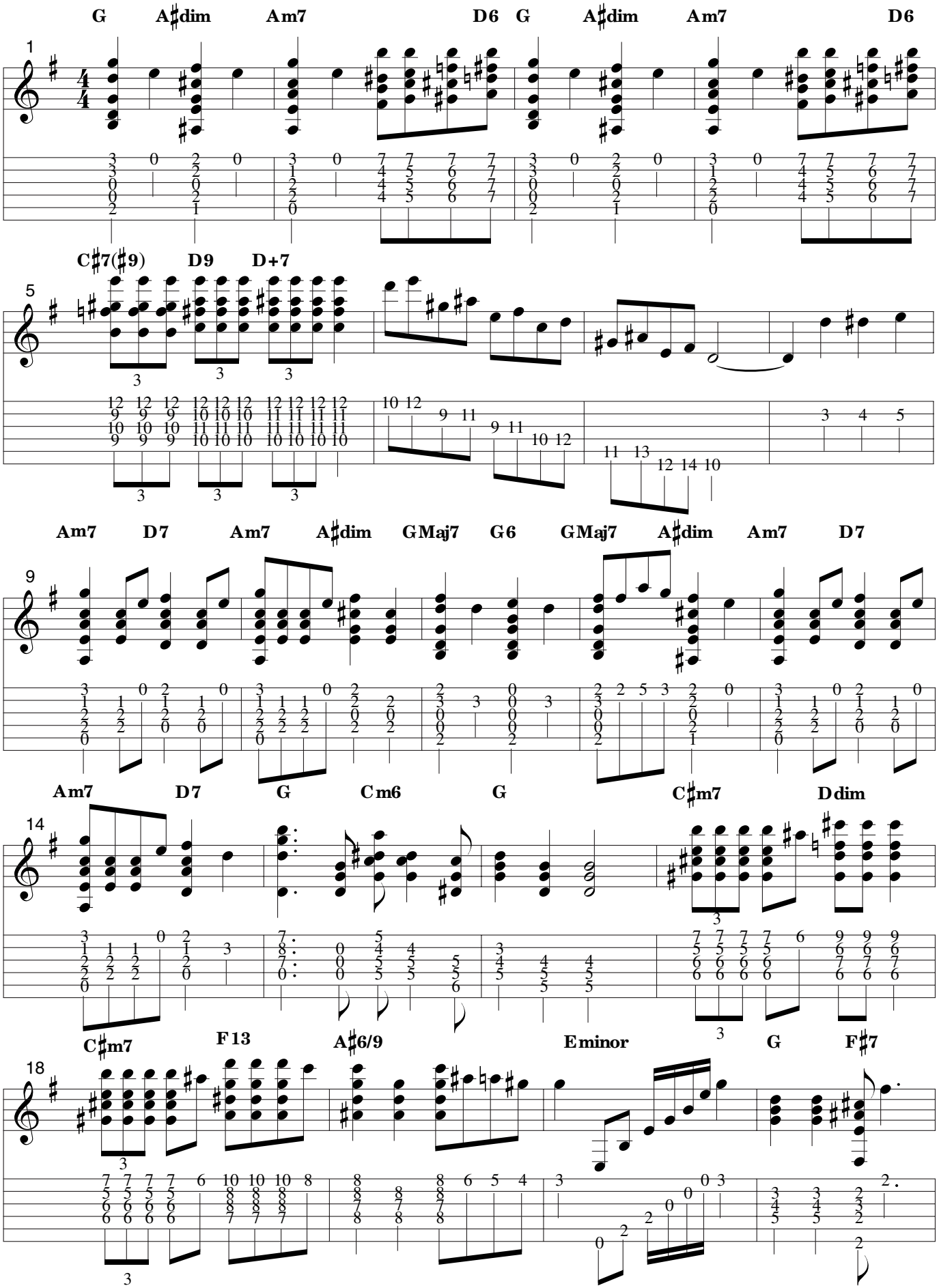
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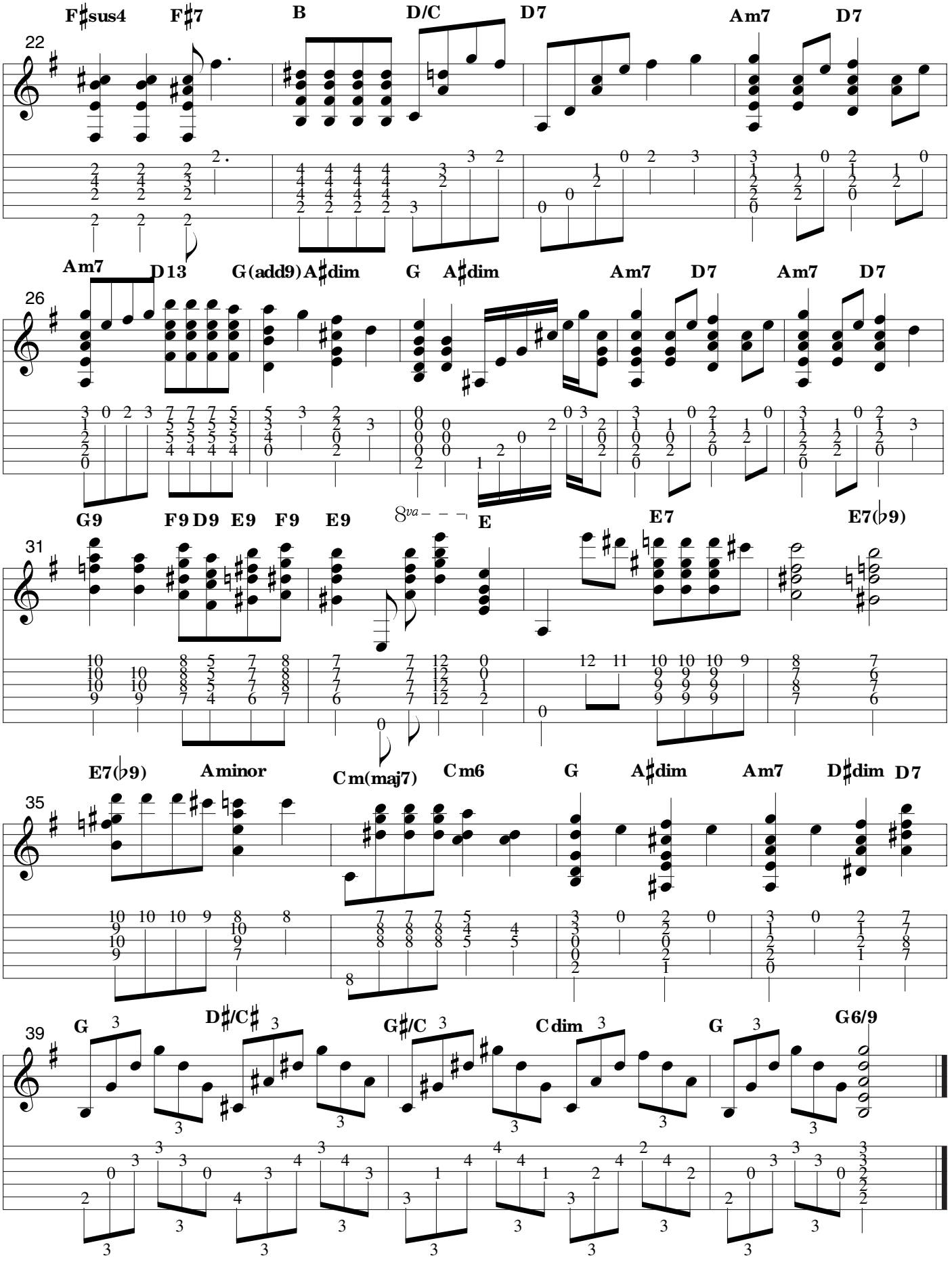
F♯sus4 F♯7 B D/C D7 Am7 D7
22
Am7 D13 G(add9) A♯dim G A♯dim Am7 D7 Am7 D7
26
G9 F9 D9 E9 F9 E9 8va E E7 E7(♭9)
31
E7(♭9) Aminor Cm(maj7) Cm6 G A♯dim Am7 D♯dim D7
35
G D♯/C♯ G♯/C Cdim G G6/9
39

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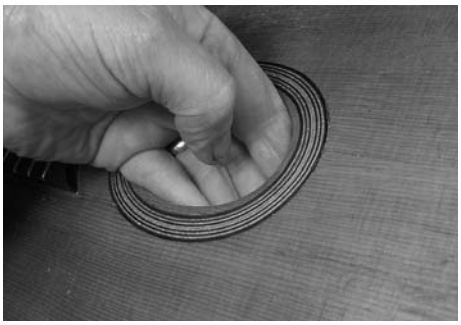
Guitar Maintenance and Repair

by Frank Ford

A Few Maintenance and Repair Considerations for Selmer's Jazz Guitars

In this short article, I'll present a few observations about the unique "Django style jazz guitars" designed by Mario Maccafferri and built by Selmer of Paris. If you own one of these rare vintage instruments or if you have a replica, there should be something interesting here for you. These days we're fortunate to have a wide variety of replicas available in many price ranges —from inexpensive Asian made models to individually hand-crafted works that equal or improve on the originals.

Being a repairman, the first thing that strikes me about these guitars is that many of them are virtually inaccessible for easy structural repair. Just like the f-hole jazz guitar, I can't get my hand into the soundhole as I would with a regular flat top guitar:

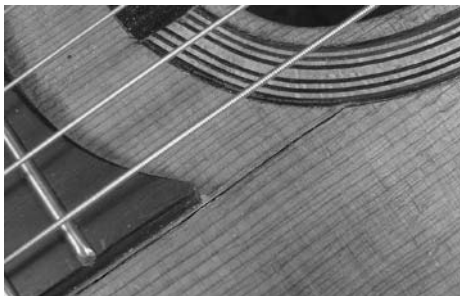


Even the famous "Big Mouth" often has a nonremovable baffle:

Yikes! It covers both the top and bottom of the soundhole:

Some, like this Eddie Freeman model tenor guitar, have neither baffles nor overhanging fingerboard, so I can reach in with my tools to reglue loose braces, fix cracks, or whatever:

Speaking of cracks, here's a classic. This crack is the result of dryness, often brought on by extreme heat such as that found in a hot parked car. The crack runs along one or both edges of the fingerboard from the neck block all the way to the soundhole:



Such a crack threatens the structural integrity of the top, and often allows the sections of spruce to move laterally, allowing the neck to pull forward drastically. Even with this little soundhole, I have room to get in there to add some reinforcement and/or reglue braces under that section of the top to stabilize it. This would be a nasty job indeed if it were the "D-hole" model with the upper baffle firmly glued in place. I'd be forced to remove the baffle, and that can lead to a lot more structural and cosmetic repair. Fortunately, these guitars are not particularly vulnerable to this kind of damage.

The original tuners on Selmer guitars are well made, and quite simple to service if they are not structurally damaged. After all these years the old mechanisms can really benefit from some cleaning and lubrication. First, I'll remove the covers:

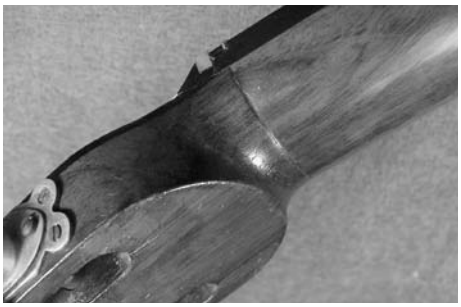
Notice that the little stamped sheet metal cover is itself part of the mechanism, providing the bearings for the worm gear:

The grease inside has turned to the consistency of old dried varnish, so I take the parts off and clean them with mineral spirits:

Mineral spirits or naphtha will dissolve the old grease without affecting the plastic buttons. The buttons can be replaced with modern ones if necessary, but I sure wouldn't want to be in need of replacement gear parts!

Then, some nice fresh white grease to lubricate all the moving parts, and these old gears will work just as they did when they were new:

The peghead of this original Selmer is joined to the neck with a traditional splice, which can break in peculiar ways on impact:

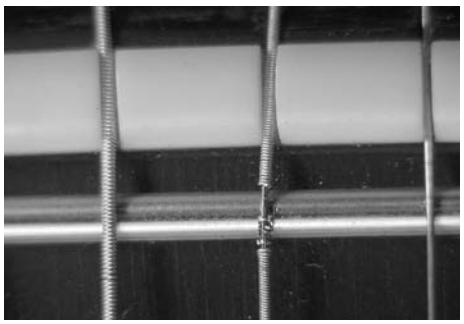


I've yet to see any modern Maccafferri replica instruments with such a peghead joint. One can argue that a joint in this position avoids the unfavorable grain direction that occurs in standard one-piece neck design, but I doubt the neck is any stronger built this way. Originals usually have a laminated or "stacked" heel as well, clearly a matter of wood economy common to classical guitar construction. Most of us flatpickers have been brought up with Martin guitars as a standard of reference, so we're used to seeing one-piece necks but Taylor and others are starting to change the image of laminated heels as a sign of inferiority. In fact, jointed pegheads and laminated heels are very old traditional designs and serve very well.

Likewise, the "zero fret" or "fret nut" is often associated with inexpensive instruments. It's not necessarily a cheaper way to make a guitar, and it is the way Selmer did it, so it's the way virtually all replicas are made, too:

Detractors of the zero fret often cite the fact that it is a way to escape setting the height of the nut by avoiding the hand filing of each groove. In skilled hands, action setting at the nut takes only a few moments, so there really isn't all that much of a labor savings. Here's a thought: There's a lot of downward string pressure at the nut on any steel strung guitar with a slotted peghead. So, the metal bearing surface at the zero fret allows the string to slide over the nut more smoothly so the string doesn't "jump" or "ping" as it's tuned up. The bone nut only acts as a guide for spacing the strings and doesn't bear much load, so the string has far less tendency to settle into the bone and deform the bottom of the slots as it would in a traditional Martin design.

As with so many other things, there's a down side, too:

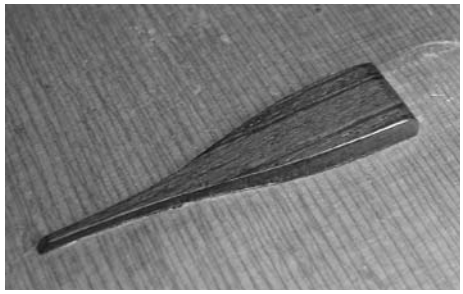


String windings are more likely to be damaged by the harder material of the zero fret than by a traditional bone nut.

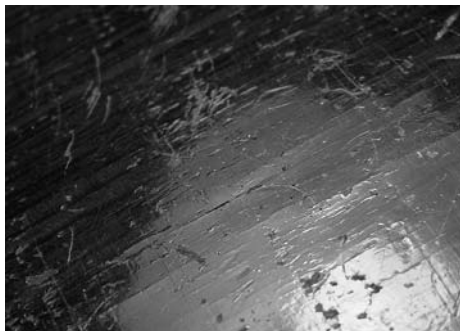
Check out the underside of the standard bridge:

It's hollowed out, reducing the mass, improving tone and volume. Also, the hollow structure makes it easier for the luthier to fit the bridge precisely to the top. The center section of the bridge is held in place by string tension and may be moved around to achieve correct intonation. A moveable bridge is a real advantage, and is common to all archtop acoustic instruments. Unlike the heavier acoustic f-hole jazz guitar with its heavier stringing, the Selmer style instrument never has an adjustable bridge. The metal hardware would simply mute the tone too much.

By the way, the little decorative "wings" are just that, a tip of the hat to centuries earlier guitar designs:



Many modern makers use some of the finest solid hardwoods for the backs and sides of their Maccafferri style guitars, although the originals were laminated (except the tops, of course). Here, you can see the result of checking and delamination in the back of a rosewood Selmer:



In reflected light, you can often see myriad tiny veneer and finish cracks. Such cracks have no structural importance and seldom endanger the life or tone of an instrument. They can look pretty bad, though, and may necessitate some pretty serious corrective cosmetic work.

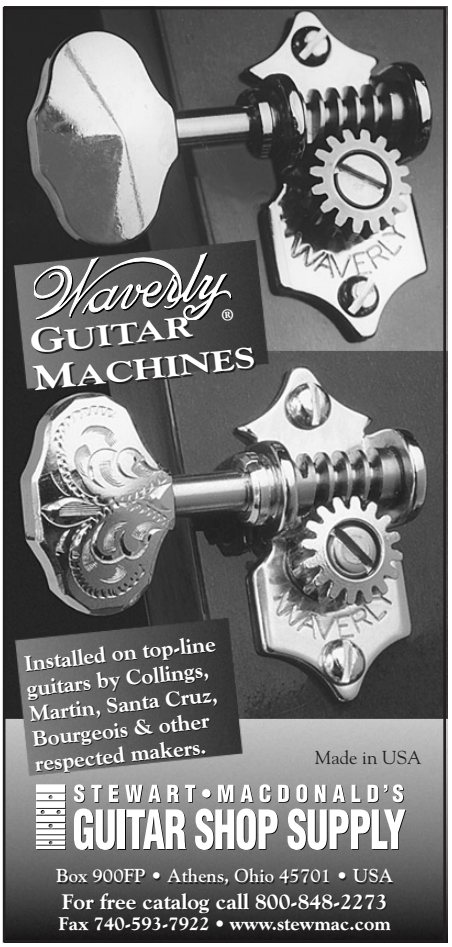
Inside the same rosewood guitar, you can see the innermost layer is actually mahogany:

Clearly there was no attempt to disguise the use of laminated materials. In fact, the reason for using laminated backs and sides may not have been a matter of economy. We'd probably have to ask Mr. Maccafferri about that. . .

Here we arrive at the bottom end of the guitar, where the tailpiece attaches:

These guitars have very light stamped brass tailpieces, which are rather easily damaged by bending. Most builders add a bit of resilient material under the tailpiece where it bends over the body to cut down the possibility of rattles. If you're tempted to do this yourself, it's a good idea to loosen the screws to slip a thin strip of leather or felt underneath the tailpiece. In an situation, resist the temptation to bend the tailpiece upward - brass really doesn't like to be bent and rebent.

Whether you call 'em Gypsy guitars, Maccafferri guitars, Selmers or Django style guitars, these are some of the coolest instruments around, and pretty much the only instruments capable of those unique Gypsy Jazz sounds!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Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel

James Taylor. Ask your average Joe on the street about him and you'll most likely get—"Oh yeah, that 'Fire and Rain' folky guy, right?" Ask a guitar player, though, and you'll get an enthusiastic affirmative, a headshake of awed respect and a question fired back at you—"Have you seen him live?" For it's live that the true scope of his artistry becomes most apparent.

Yes, J. T. occupies a solid spot near the top of acoustic players' pantheon of primary influences. Possessed of a keenly observant and poetic mind, a warm and soulful voice, a wry and self deprecating wit and simply groundbreakingly influential fingerstyle rhythm guitar playing, he's indeed been a consistently impressive package since the late 60s, who shows no sign of slacking off anytime soon. Good news for his legion of fans, no doubt! Here's a tune of his that's "Taylor" made for my column's focus on folk/acoustic rock tunes: "Me and My Guitar." I've tabbed out one of my solo breaks from the duo version of the song that I do with my playing partner in RST, Geoffrey Rutledge, who sings lead vocal and plays rhythm guitar on the companion CD for this issue. The solo that is tabbed out starts at about 1:38 into the recording. We perform this song live a lot and it's not only fun to play but also neat to watch other guitar players in the audience smile and nod with the shared understanding of the bond that guitarists develop with their instruments.

I usually just improvise the solo sections in this tune. I like jamming to this one because you can switch back and forth between minor key blues style riffing and more melodic major key modes, and they both sound good (theoretically,anyway!) You can learn the solo presented here and then use it as a springboard for one of you own.

At the top of the solo, notice the series of notes on the high E string droning along with the D and E notes being played on the B string. Also, at the end of the sixth measure, notice the minor/major interplay between the A and G# notes. Then we have a nice repeating 3 note ascending sequence, beginning on the A string 7th fret and working all the way up to the bent note on the highest 15th fret.

I'll leave you all with a couple of quotes from musicians who performed here in Santa Cruz in the strange year of 2001. From Brazilian musician Ricardo Peixoto—"There's a lot to be said for just showing up. You have to just keep working on it. You can work on craft in a methodical way, but art, you find. You have to be listening to whatever may come and grab it, evaluate if you can use it or not, and work with it. That's where craft comes in, working with what does come your way. That's about all you can hope for."

And from local classical flutist Kathleen Percell—"It's about relaxing and never thinking that you're supposed to be some other place than you are right now." Amen to that Kathleen! Until next time, good picking!

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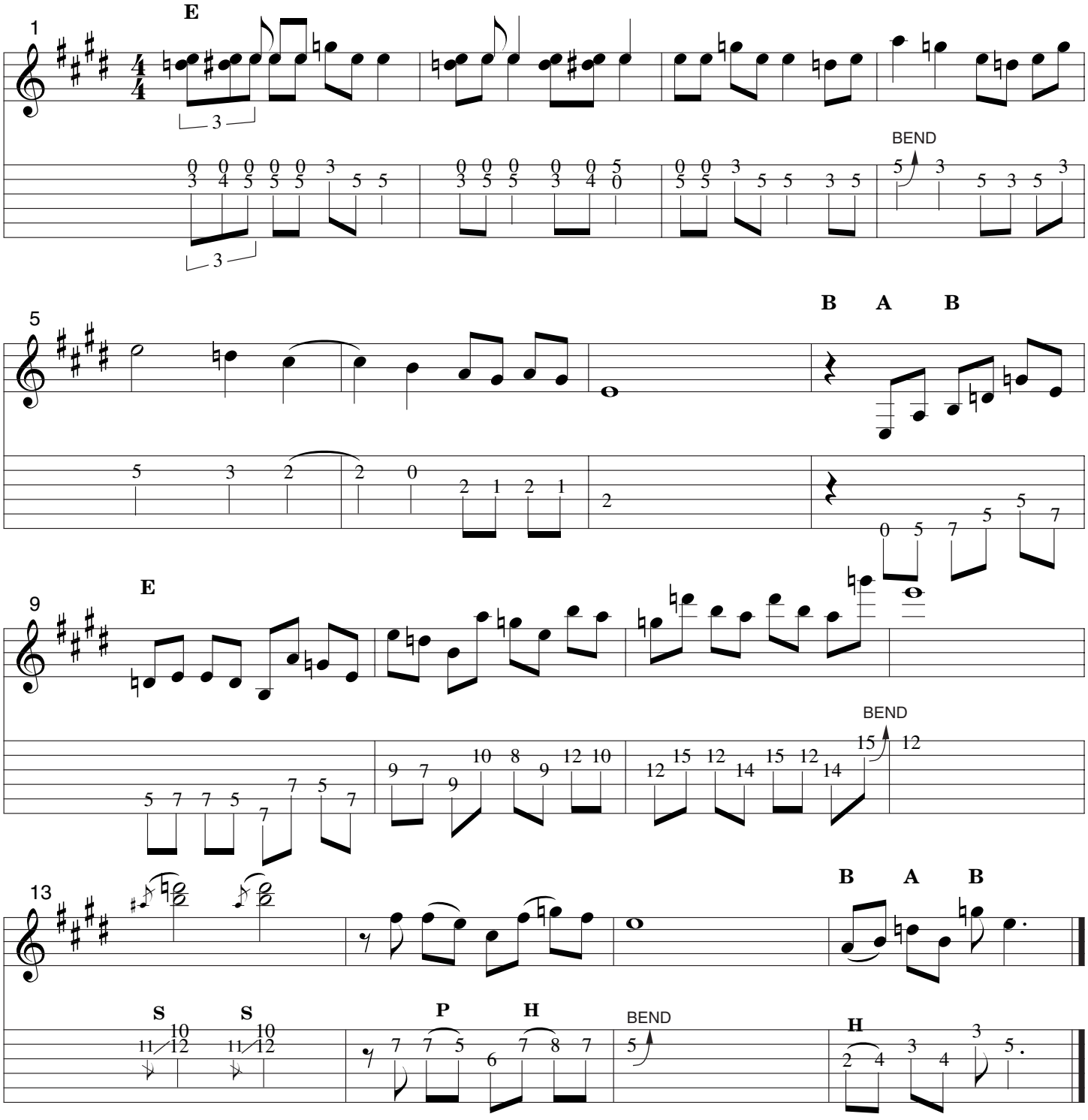
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Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Hi friends, and welcome to a special Django issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. I first heard of Django when I went over to guitar star and wizard Mike Scapp's house. I was probably 17 at the time. I entered his room and he said, "You got to hear this guy." He explained how Django had messed up his left hand and I commented on how hard that must be for him to play. Mike then put the record back to the top of the cut and preceded to play along using just one finger on his left hand. This is when I learned that no matter the handicap, you could still play guitar.

This arrangement is written with 4 fingers in mind. The 1st two measures are in 7th position. Hit the 7th fret notes with the 1st finger.

Measure 3: After the first note, switch to 5th position. Then the last note of measure 4 you will switch back to sliding into 7th position.

Measure 9: To start, 2nd finger on the 2nd string, 3rd finger on the 1st string and then you are on your own. See what works.

I think the only other places to watch are the up swings as they are marked. Listen to the CD to get the rhythm inflections (which make a page "look" ugly when all the timing marks are included). This page looks cleaner though it is written pretty straight as far as timing pulses and timing punches go.

Have fun with this great tune. Also be on the look out for my upcoming PLP#5 *Swing Tunes That Every Parking Lot Picker Should Know Vol. 5*.

See you down the road and in June in Maryville.

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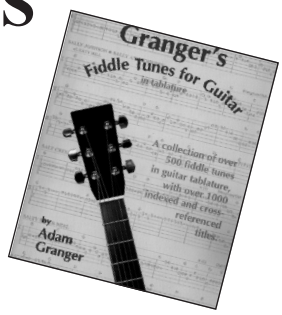
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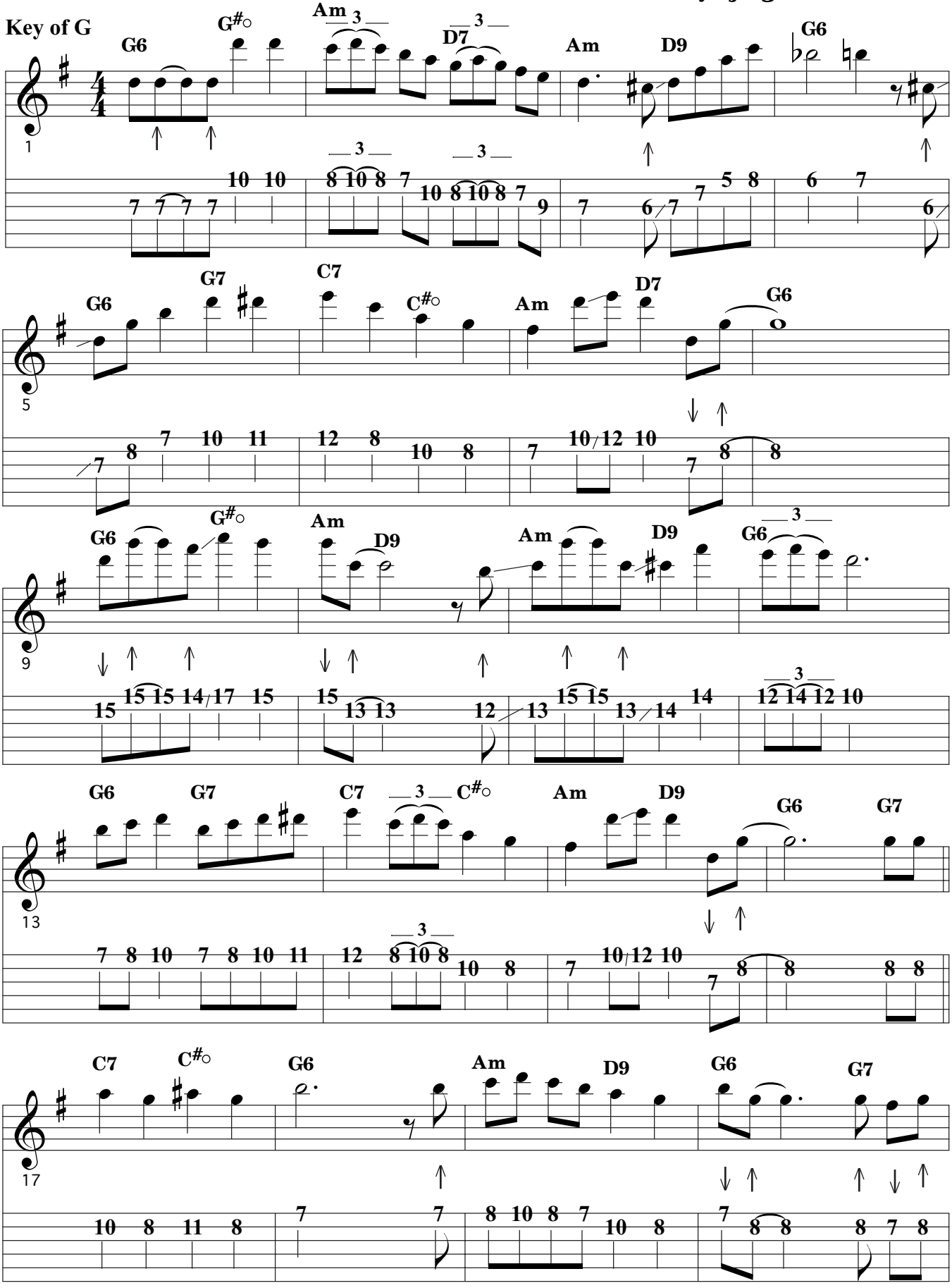
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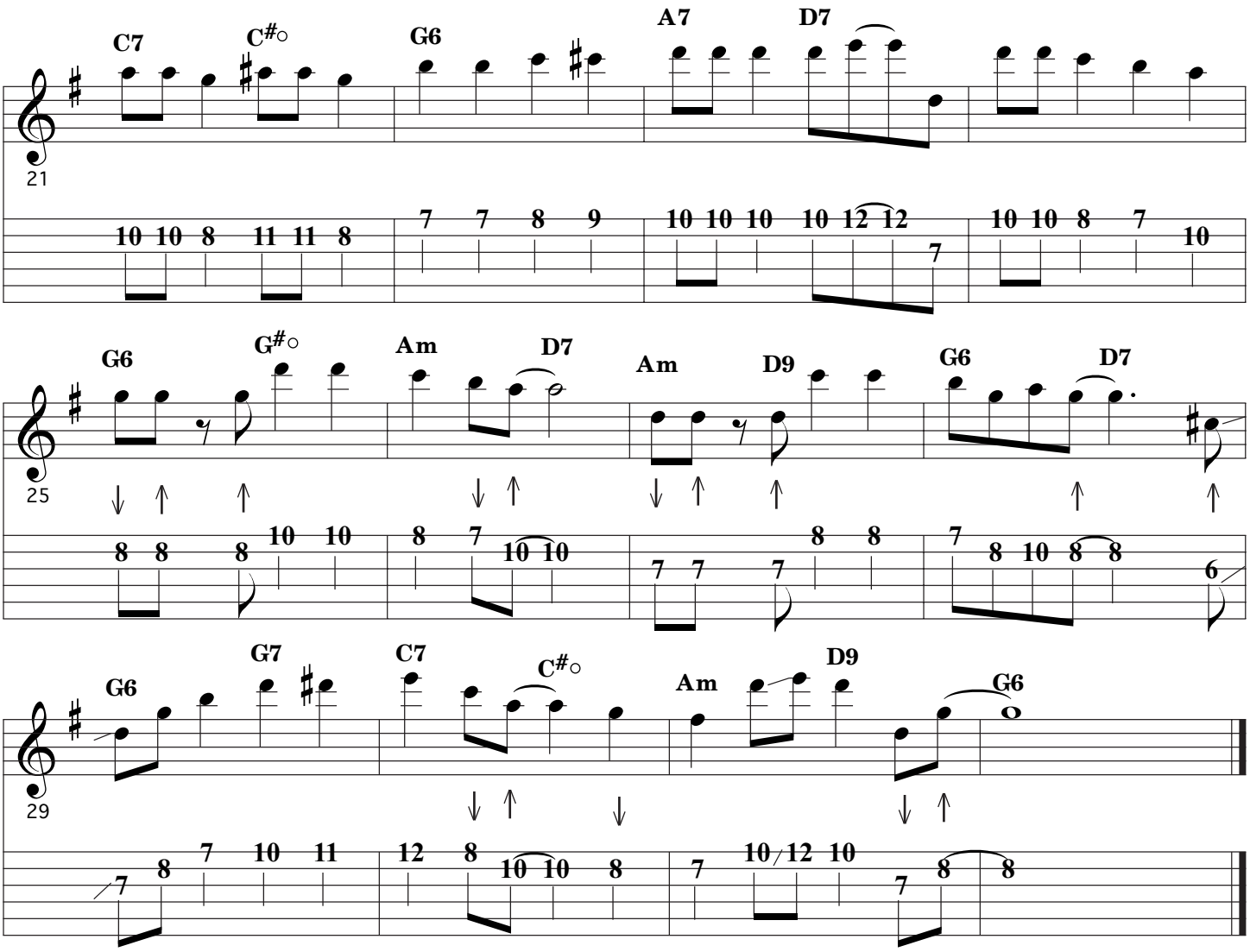

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Additionally, Wyatt is shown improvisationally accompanying various instruments (banjo, fiddle, guitar, mandolin) and then analyzing what he has done to provide the rhythmic foundation behind each instrument. Also featured are guest appearances by: Rickie Simpkins on fiddle (Sally Goodin' and Dusty Miller) and mandolin (Big Country and I Wonder Where You Are Tonight), Sammy Shelor on banjo (Ground Speed and Whitewater), Kenny Smith on guitar (Goodbye, Liza Jane and Bill Cheathum) and Tony Rice (Waltz for Indira, Manzanita, and Devlin). Wyatt provides guitar accompaniment to each of these artists and then analyzes the techniques he has employed.

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Adventures in Acoustic Music:
Django!

by John Carlini

Django! Say that name and, "Bam!", instant sound/memory rushes into our musical souls. He was/is an original. The spirit of Django lives in the past, now, and for future generations. I've listened to the same recordings over and over through the years, yet they always sound fresh! That relentless swing! How amazing is that!? How many players can that apply to? Louis Armstrong comes to mind. But I'm not going to spend this column on comparisons. This is about Django. More specifically, it's about the "sound" of Django.

I've put some time into Django's playing, and I've discovered a few things which I'm going to pass along to you.

First, let's establish a rather large concept. Django Reinhardt knew how to play that guitar! "Well, of course he did!", you're probably saying! Here's what I mean. He "spoke" the language of a sophisticated body of jazz theory of the time. The tools of that language are chords, arpeggios, scales, and rhythms as applied to a repertoire of tunes. These tools, along with the mystique of Django's Gypsy soul, his innate ability to "swing", and his huge talent, all combined to produce his "sound". (So exotic! It makes me want to dance!) I would even venture to say that his left hand problem added to his unique ability since he had to overcome it in order to play the way he did. What an inspiration!

Here's the deal. You don't just pick up an instrument and begin speaking that language, any more than you would pick up a pool cue and start "running" pool balls! Django had to have put countless hours into "working out" those chords and arpeggios, etc., as well as listening, experimenting, and jamming. Whether you play bluegrass music, fiddle tunes, Bach or swing (or pool!), it takes commitment backed up by a work ethic. It is a path. (An aside here, for those who may not be aware; Django was also a great pool player!) But with swing, an important factor is being able to play in any key with an understanding of how the chords relate to one another and how they "unfold" to produce the music. As with bluegrass music, you learn tune after tune. Soon you begin to recognize certain chordal "tendencies." These tendencies have an effect on the pieces of a grand chordal puzzle. Some of the pieces string together to produce larger "chunks" which then recur in other tunes. And so on.

That said, we're going to apply a bit of this information to your own playing to put you on the swing path. Take a look at the "jamming form" of the tune "Minor Swing." (See Ex 1. For our purposes, in order to keep things basic, I am using the version that Django recorded.) You can see that it's a three-chord form; Am, Dm, E7. Don't let that fool you. There is magic in this progression!

Step 1. If you don't already know them, learn the 3 chords (Amin6, Dmin6, and E7). They are the only chords you will need to play this tune. Use the minor 6 chord, not the minor 7. Please! Minor 7 is too "hip" for the style. That smoother sound came later with bebop and beyond. Minor 6 provides an authentic "edge" to the style. It will take some work to be able to move from Amin6 to Dmin6 smoothly and quickly. Depending on individual abilities, it may even take a few weeks. (A few minutes a day!)

Here are some tips on moving from chord to chord. From Am6 to Dm6, move your middle, index and third fingers from the 6th, 4th and 2nd strings to the 5th, 3rd and 1st strings simultaneously. Just pull them all down one string in one motion. Th en position your 4th finger on the 2nd string. While you're doing that, your 3rd finger which has been barring must move to its tip as it gets to the 1st string. The E7 should be quite familiar to you since it is simply a 1st position C7 chord moved up 4 frets. But notice that the 3rd finger is on the 6th string instead of the 5th string. You could use the 5th string (E) since it is the root, but the 6th string (B) produces a more full-sounding chord since you already have an E on the 2nd string. This is "nitty-gritty" stuff I know, but I've found that I can use all the help I can get when trying to move from one place to another on the fingerboard! Once you can play (Django 3) the chords smoothly, you're ready for the next step.

Step 2. Punch! These chords need to be punched out as though you were working out on a punch bag! "Bap! Bap! Bap! Bap! Bap! Bap! Bap! Bap!" Each attack must be precise, and the chord sound short but defined. The left hand must exercise "tension-release," "tension-release," with each beat. This creates "space" between the beats. In other words, "sound-space," "sound-space." This is very important! You don't want the chords to ring into each other as they do in bluegrass music. As always, use your metronome. This is a perfect opportunity to discipline your sense of swing time—one punch per click. Practice at a variety of tempi. A common problem in practicing with the metronome is "veering" off the click. It is crucial that you "keep a bead" on that click! If you find that your punches are not in sync with the clicks, stop immediately a nd start over. Don't worry! As always, a few minutes a day will do it.

Step 3. Listen to Django!! If you have a recording of Minor Swing, play along with the rhythm. Feel the music. Imagine that you are in the rhythm section! Set the volume at the correct level so that you can "participate". You'll know if you are getting it. You'll feel it all the way down to your shoes!!

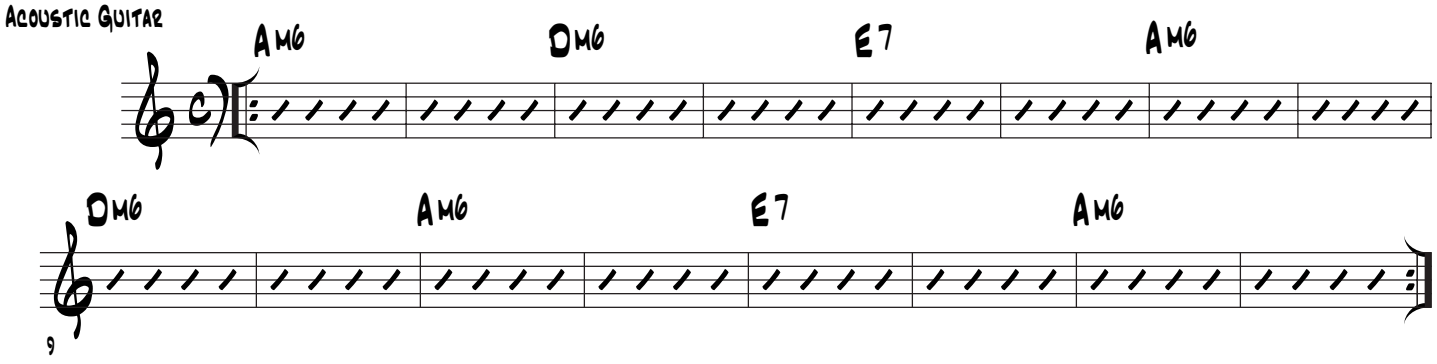
Next time we'll focus on some Django-style lead playing using some of that "mysterioso" Gypsy sound! Have a good time. Keep punching!

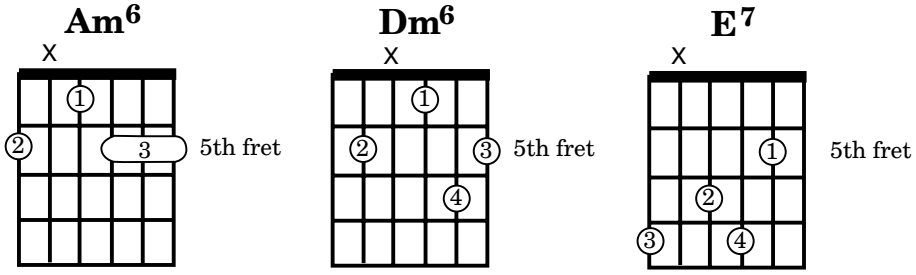
Minor Swing Solo Form

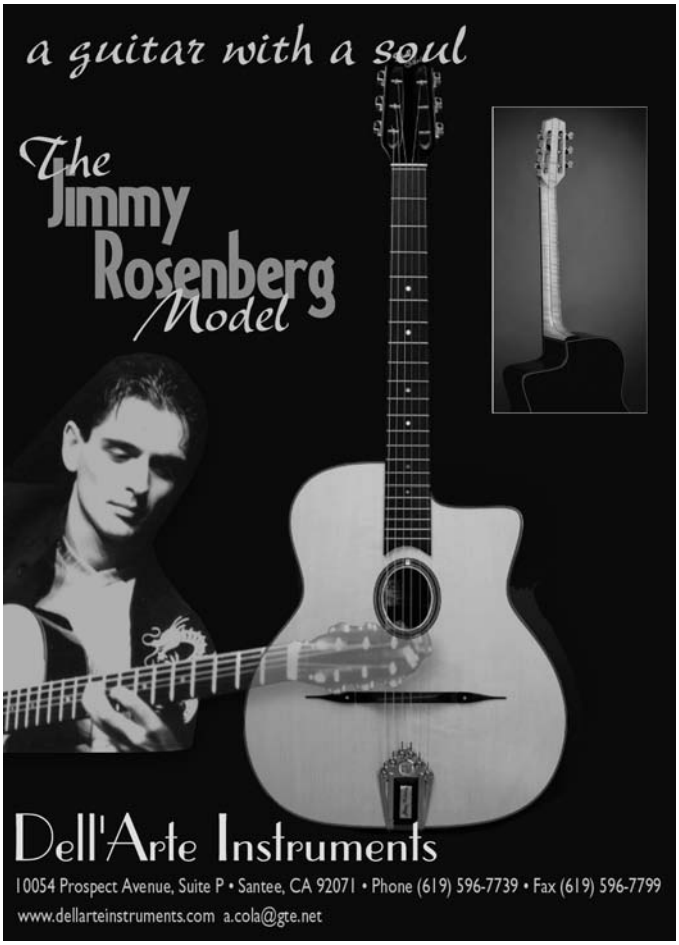
Ex 1

Django Reinhardt

Acoustic Guitar



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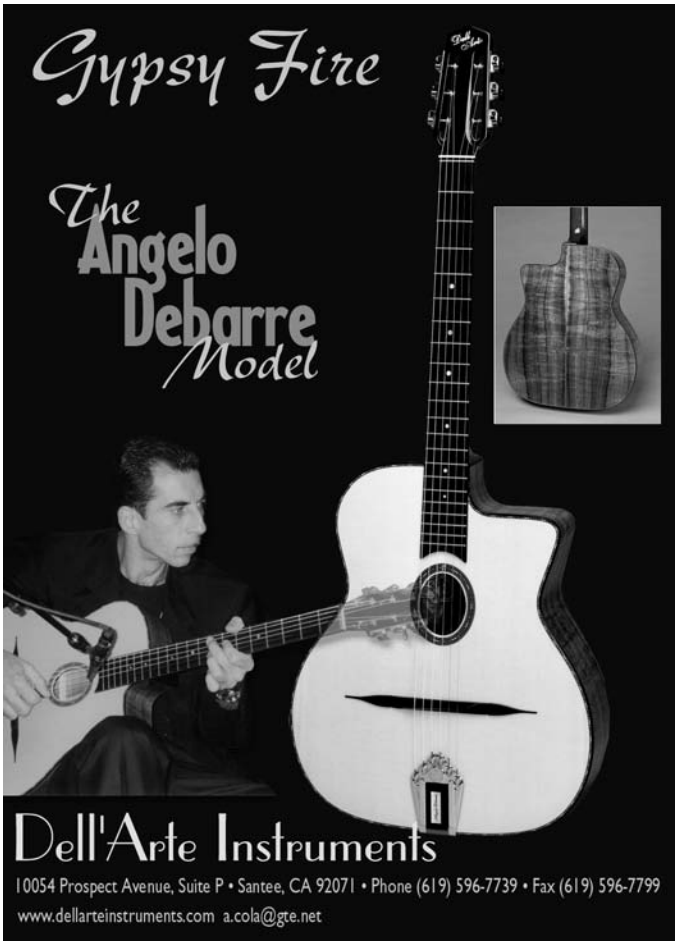
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Flatpick Profile:

Paul Mehling

by Dan Miller

It is always a pleasure to interview someone who has not only mastered their craft but also continues to be enthusiastic and excited about what they are doing long after its newness fades away. The enthusiasm that these rare individuals radiatebecomes contagious. Before interviewing Paul Mehling for this issue's "Flatpick Profile" column, I had never listened to much "Gypsy jazz" music and I had never tried to play it on the guitar. However, after interviewing Paul, I wanted to call Dell'Arte Instruments and ask about ordering a Maccaferri style guitar and look on Travelocity for cheap tickets to France! His abundant enthusiasm for this music is infectious. Paul says, "You have to have a fire in your belly to play this music." Paul Mehling is a great "Gypsy jazz" guitar stylist with a deep knowledge of the music and its roots and, after nearly thirty years of studying, practicing, playing, and performing this music, that fire in his belly is still burning strong.

Paul's first exposure to Django Reinhardt came when he was about five years old. His father was a record collector and owned a compilation of recordings Django had made with various configurations of the Hot Club of France. Paul said, "It was a hodgepodge of what Django was up to." However, this early exposure to the great Gypsy guitarist was not the spark that lit Paul's passion for the guitar. That came a few years later when, like thousands of other kids his age, Paul heard the Beatles on Ed Sullivan and "wanted to be a Beatle." Paul says, "I begged, and begged, and begged my mother for a guitar. She said, 'If I'm going to get you a guitar, you are going to have to take lessons.' "

Paul began taking guitar lessons when he was seven, but says, "the teachers hated me because I thought that I could learn on my own and so I didn't do what they wanted me to do." Although the lessons did not go well, Paul continued to play the guitar on his own. He was interested in anything acoustic and "noodled around" with the Beatles acoustic songs, Crosby, Stills, and Nash's music, and "anything that sounded acoustic." Paul also began playing string bass in school, but says, "I hated having to learn how to read music and I didn't want to be a bass player because having grown up with guys like Django in my ear I thought, 'I don't want to play bass. You can't play that fast.' I told my teacher that I wanted to learn the guitar."

The recording that turned Paul's ear away from acoustic rock and roll and towards swing music was by Dan Hicks and the Hot Licks. Paul first heard Dan Hicks just before he entered high school in Pleasanton, California, and says, "I heard that and flipped. A switch in my brain went, 'I know what this is all about. It sounds like that Django record. This is what I want to play!' Dan Hicks had only put out four or five records, but before long I had them all memorized. I also began listening to more Hot Club of France as well as Glen Miller, Benny Goodman, and other 30s-era jazz, which led me to Louis Armstrong and the stuff from the 20s."

Paul remembers, "There was something about the swing... the rhythm. And Dan Hicks had it all. He had acoustic bass, jazz violin, snappy tempos, his lyrics were really hip at the time, and I thought 'Wow, this is it.' But, as a result, I suffered a lot at school because I was considered a geek in my two tone shoes and Hawaiian shirts. It was also hard trying to find a girlfriend who could dig jazz." Being a social outcast with schoolmates didn't dissuade Paul from pressing forward with his pursuit of jazz. In high school he started a jazz band that was patterned after Dan Hicks and the Hot Licks. The band played at talent shows, wine and cheese parties, and dances. At that time Paul was playing a Selmer copy made by Gabe Souza. In addition to guitar, he was also learning how to play the violin.

After graduating high school in 1975, Paul moved to Santa Cruz and began playing plectrum banjo with Jake Stock and the Abalone Stompers. He says, "I didn't want to play banjo, but the band had a great guitar player and I wanted to soak that up and learn about what a guitar player does in a band." The band played happy hour every Friday at a bar called the Catalyst, which had the largest dance hall and longest bar

in northern California. Paul recalls, "It was kind of a Dixieland and swing band and I didn't get paid to play with them. I was very much an apprentice. But it was so cool because one of the guitar players was this guy who was about seventy who played an f-hole guitar sort of in the George Van Eps style, but not real sophisticated, more swingy than Van Eps in that he wasn't going for dense harmonies and cool arrangements, but he could just improvise in a chord style. It wasn't really what I was interested in, but that got me into Carl Kress and Dick McDonough and I studied all of those guys' stuff. The one guitar was doing that kind of stuff and the other guitar player in the band was playing these stacked chords on top of it. It was kind of like two of Nick Lucas or Eddie Lang in the band, and they were totally nuts. I studied them and tried to learn both parts." Paul stayed with that band and played the weekly gig on Fridays and the Catalyst for fourteen years.

About a year after Paul started playing with Jake Stock, he also got a job playing with the Magnolia Jazz Band and to this day still plays two to three gigs a week with that band. He describes the band's music as "swing tunes and traditional jazz." The configuration is usually a trio or quartet with Paul on guitar joined by a string bass, clarinet, and sometimes trumpet, sax, or drums. He says the band usually does the "bread and butter" gigs providing "commercial background music" at corporate functions in Silicon Valley. Regarding his guitar work with this band, Paul says, "At first I felt I had to play more generic because I didn't want to push the Django thing. But the better I have gotten at the Django thing and the more clout I have as a Django authority, the more comfortable I feel having people deal with that. Fortunately these guys have come to like it."

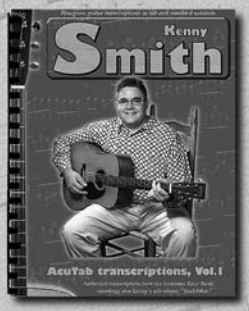
In 1981 Paul moved to France for six months, lived in a one bedroom studio apartment and played classical music on violin in the metro to make money while he sought to study Gypsy jazz guitar. Paul says, "I would play violin in the mornings and then in the afternoon I would go looking for Gypsy guys who played guitar. It took me a long time. When I finally found some guys—two guys in a park with guitars—they saw me standing there and one guy started talking to me in French. I had my violin with me and he said, 'So, you play that?' They wanted me to join them, but I told them that I would rather listen. The guy's face just totally fell. They started playing 'Sweet Georgia Brown.' I knew the song, so I whipped out my violin and started playing and from then on I was like their brother." One of the guitar players turned out to be Serge Krief (who can be seen in the Shanachie video *The Legacy of Django Reinhardt*). Paul spent time busking with the two guitarists, playing violin, but always looking over Serge's shoulder and soaking up his technique. Paul says, "I made some tape recordings and studied them like crazy after I came back home."

In 1988 Paul got the opportunity to play with the band that made him "flip" for swing. Paul says, "After doing a commercial for Levis, Dan Hicks was on the comeback trail. I went to see him and an acquaintance of mine was playing violin was with Dan's band. I didn't care for this guy's violin playing in that setting because he was more of a fiddler and I had always thought of Dan Hicks as having more of a jazz violinist. But Dan is very broad minded. I don't think he was as deep into jazz as I gave him credit for, in fact, I think his real allegiance was more towards western swing. Anyway, at the time I really wanted to play violin. I was in the Santa Cruz symphony for a season and I was studying like mad and I thought that Dan should have me playing violin. But Dan's violin player called me and said, 'I can't promise anything, but I think our guitar player is leaving and Dan is looking for a new guitar player, why don't you give him a call.' It was humbling, but I wound up getting the gig playing guitar. I think Dan thought of me as a pesky little brother because he could not believe that I knew all of his tunes and had them down cold." Paul held the job with Dan Hick's band for nearly five years and got to play on the Dan Hicks and the Hot Licks reunion show on Austin City Limits.

In 1989 Paul moved to San Francisco and by 1991 had started his band The Hot Club of San Francisco (www.hcsf.com). The band now has six recordings and plays at Enricos in the North Beach area of San Francisco every Tuesday night. They were also the first American band to be invited to play at the music festival dedicated to Django Reinhardt in Samois, France.

Shortly after starting the Hot Club band, Paul approached Happy Traum about a instructional video on Gypsy jazz guitar because he says, "I thought there was a need." Happy Traum thought that it was a great idea, but the production did not

Acutab Guitar



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Paul Mehling in Samois, France

get completed for seven years. The video turned into a two-video set released late in 1997 (see review in *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*, Volume 2, Number 2 January/ February 1998).

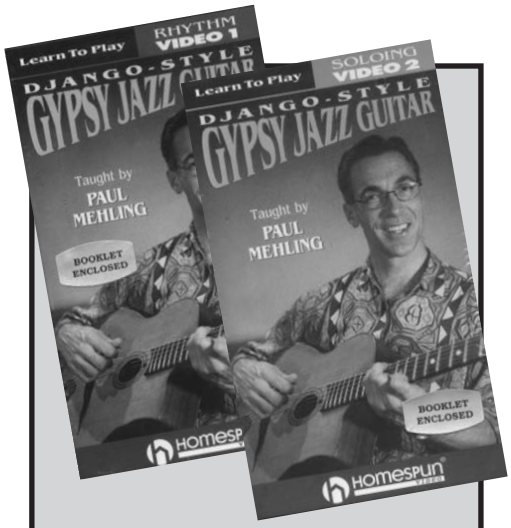
The first video in the set focuses on the Gypsy jazz rhythm style. Paul teaches a variety of chords positions, voicings, and progressions while demonstrating various right hand techniques characteristic of the style. Paul says, "I don't know any good Django style lead player who is not totally awesome at rhythm. All the guys I know who play solo guitar—Stochelo Rosenberg, Raphael Fays, Angelo Debarre—all those guys played rhythm for somebody else. In fact, some of their fathers played with Django—like the Ferret brothers, their father was Matelo Ferret and he is on a lot of the recordings with the Quintet."

Paul recommends that anyone who is interested in Django's lead playing spend a good deal of time learning how to play the rhythm first. With regards to learning rhythm, Paul recommends that you find someone who is good at it and "watch and listen."

I found Paul's rhythm video to be excellent. I had always been a little hesitant in taking the leap to try and learn how to play swing rhythm (too many fancy chords!), but I thoroughly enjoyed working with Paul's video and I now have more confidence in my ability to learn swing style rhythm.

Paul's lead guitar video is also very well done. In this video Paul teaches many of the essential Gypsy jazz techniques, such as the use of arpeggios (what Paul calls the "heart of the Gypsy jazz style"); sweep picking; use of diminished chords; peddling; ornaments such as hammer-ons, pull-offs, trills, and bends specific to the style; glissando; and tremolo. All of these techniques, and the specific examples and exercises Paul demonstrates in the video, are key to learning the Gypsy jazz style. I highly recommend that anyone interested in learning this guitar style check out Paul's videos. In working with the two videos I discovered that many of these techniques are also directly applicable to fiddle tunes and bluegrass playing. When Paul breaks down the Gypsy techniques, one can hear the Django Reinhardt influence in the playing of flatpicking heroes like Doc Watson, Clarence White, and Tony Rice.

When asked how the best way an aspiring guitar player can begin to learn how to play Django style guitar, Paul said, "The absolute best way to learn how to play like Django is to play with Django. Pick a record, or pick one tune, and really nail it. The learning process can be learned. People say, 'I'm too old to learn.' I tell them, 'Look, you are old enough to motivate yourself.' You are old enough to say, 'Get back in there and practice,' or 'do that one more time.' The biggest mistake people make when they play Django style is being impatient. I tell them to slow down and don't go on to the next thing until you have the thing you are working on absolutely internalized. Know what is on the page you are on before you turn the page. There is no shame when you are in your own woodshed."

In upcoming issues of this magazine readers will have plenty of opportunities to woodshed with some Gypsy jazz material as Paul Mehling will be joining us as one of our regular columnists.

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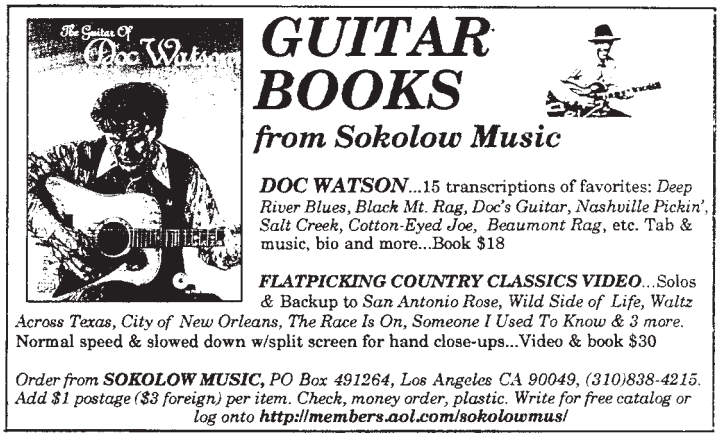
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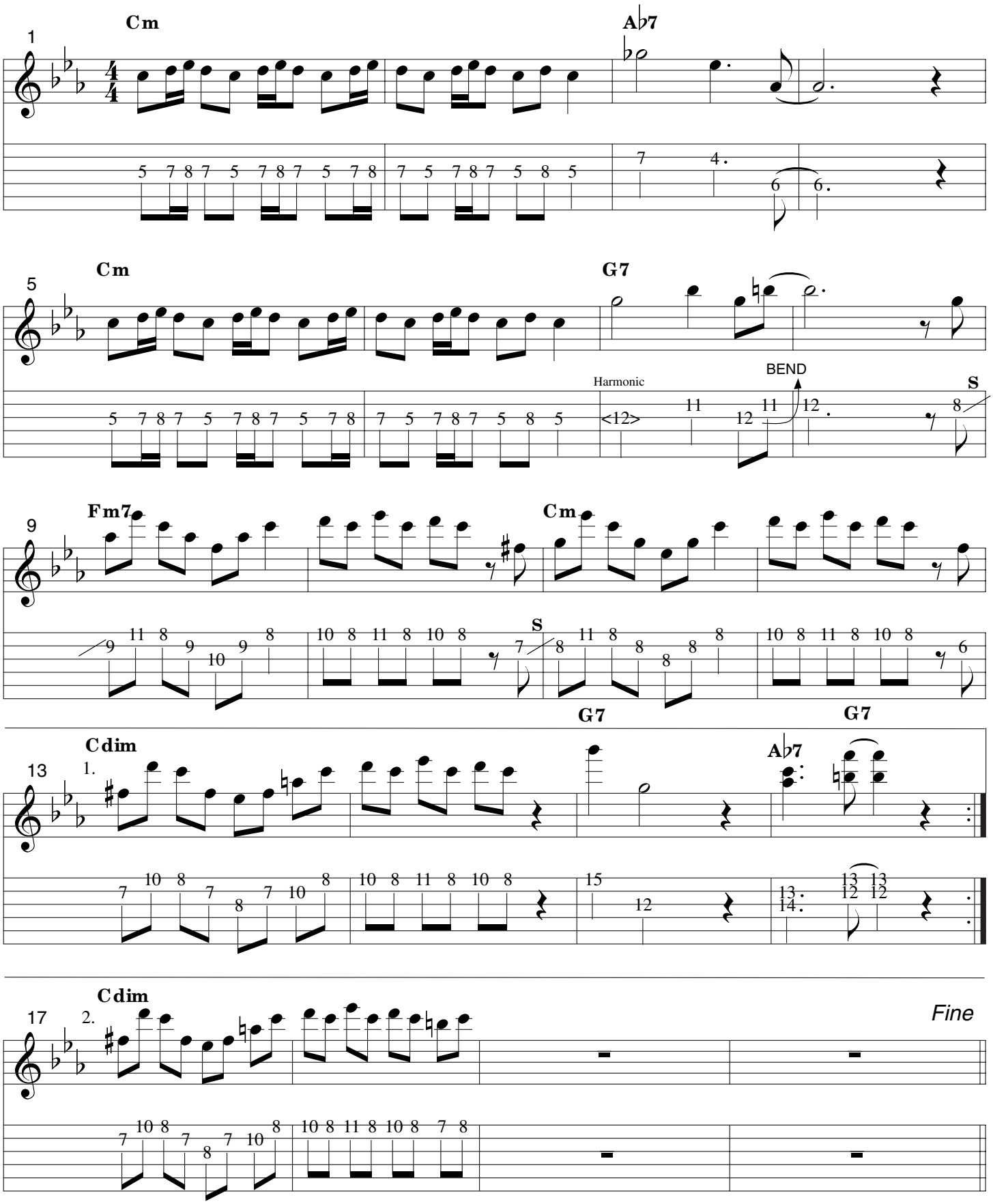
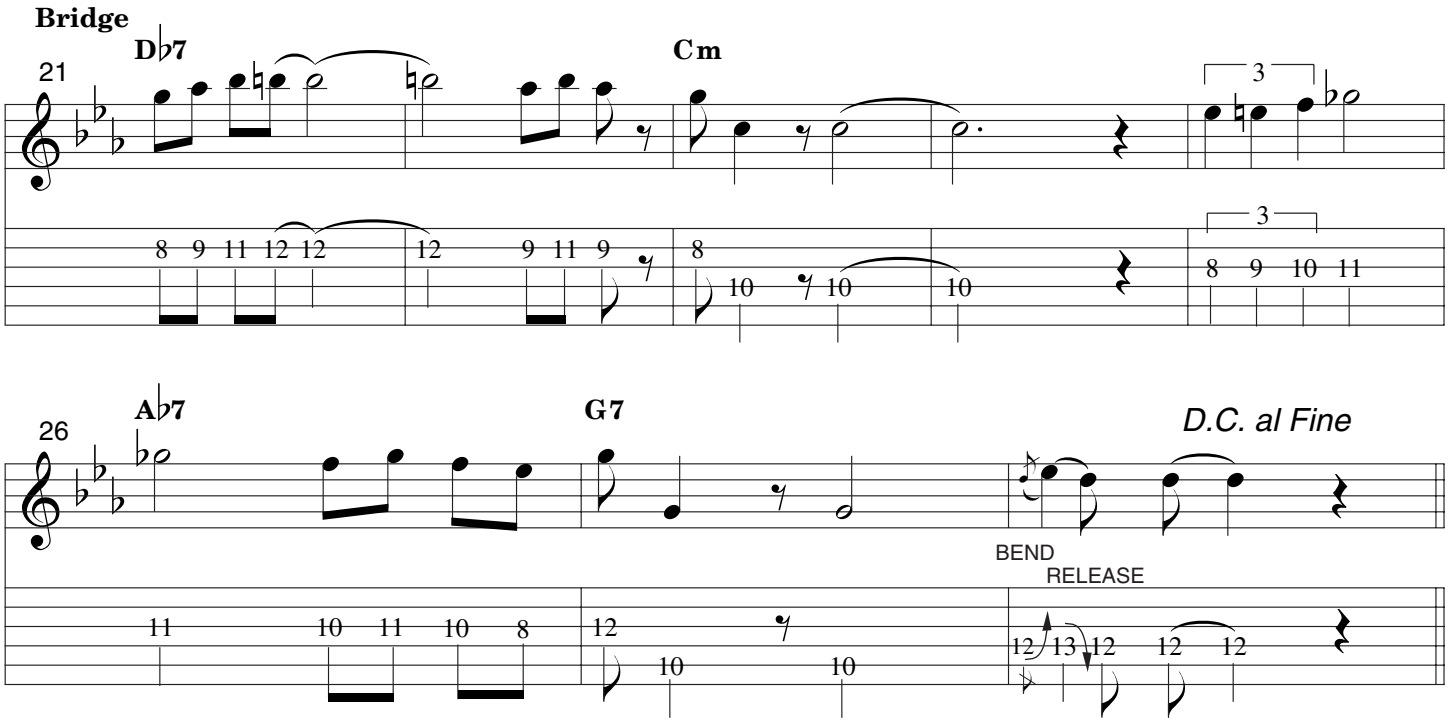
Don't Panic

Written by Paul Mehling



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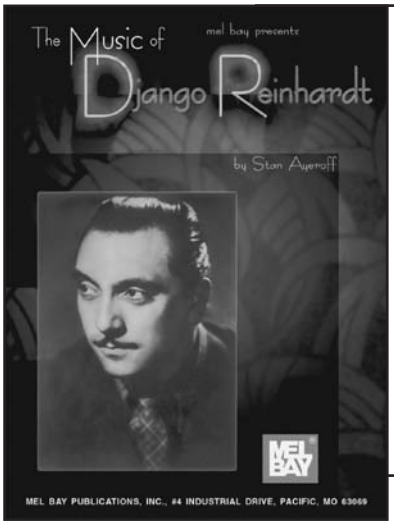

The Music of Django Reinhardt

By Stan Ayeroff

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NASHVILLE FLATTOP

By Brad Davis

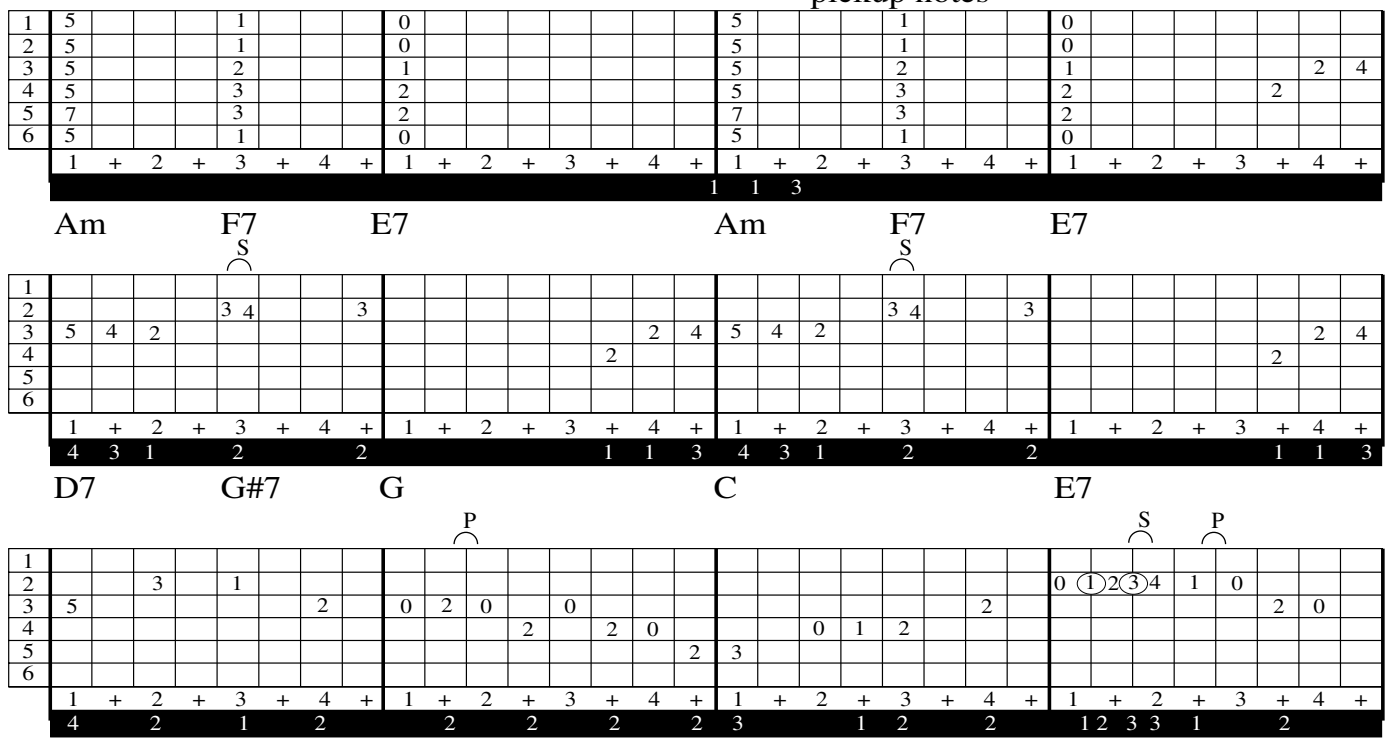
Django!

He used two fingers to do what most players can't even begin to try.

This is a clear case of *the handicap becomes the advantage*. The style of Django is very recognizable and somewhat tricky to execute. Going into it knowing that he only used two fingers on the left hand can fool the listener. One needs to jump into the mind of Django and no better way to do that than to give it a try playing with two fingers. Now this is something that I wouldn't recommend all the time, but just for a moment use two fingers to better understand where his thoughts were coming from. You may want to try the first and second fingers or the first and third. Once you get the hang of the melody and lick structure integrate one of your other fingers and slowly get back to your comfortable position. At least it will be fun! Below I have tabbed out a simple original tune titled "Cabernet" that has the flavor of Django. Many pickers shy away from this style of music simply because they fear the difficulty factor in learning it. It's not that hard folks. First copy the other guy and then start creating lick phrases that sound like the style of the person you're trying to copy. Also remember that trying to think like the other guy can aid in the process. Good luck!!!!!

Key of C
Intro

Cabernet



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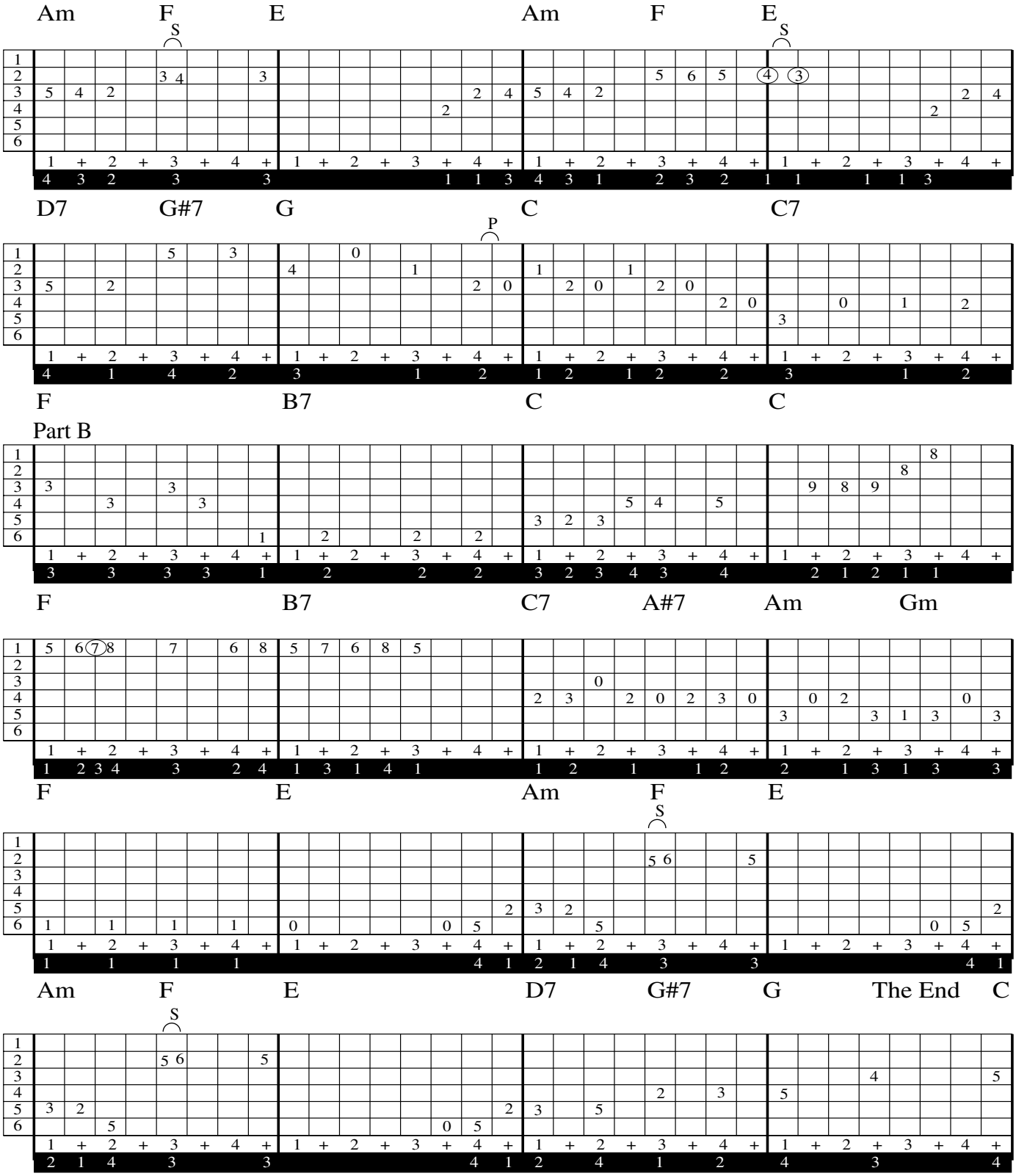


JAM TUNES

Wyatt Rice and "Minor Swing"

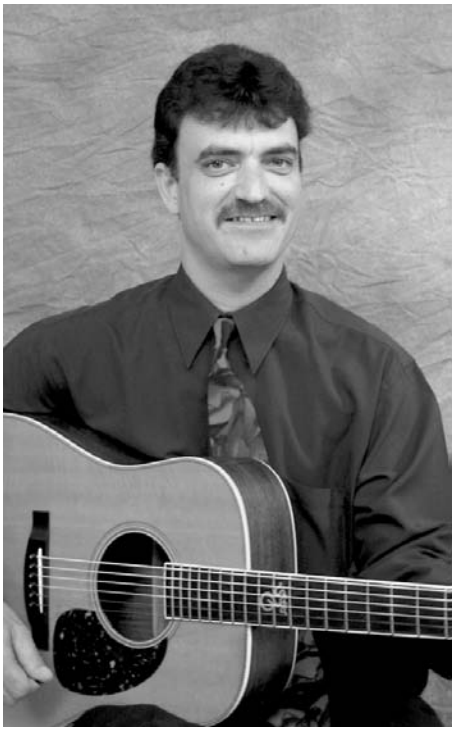
For this issue's "Jam Tune" we asked Wyatt Rice to come into the studio and play his arrangement of "Minor Swing." Amongst flatpickers, "Minor Swing" is probably the best known of the tunes from Django Reinhardt's repertoire, and it can be heard at many flatpicking jam sessions. When this tune is called out at flatpicking jams the first question asked is, "Do we do Grisman's version or Reinhardt's version?"

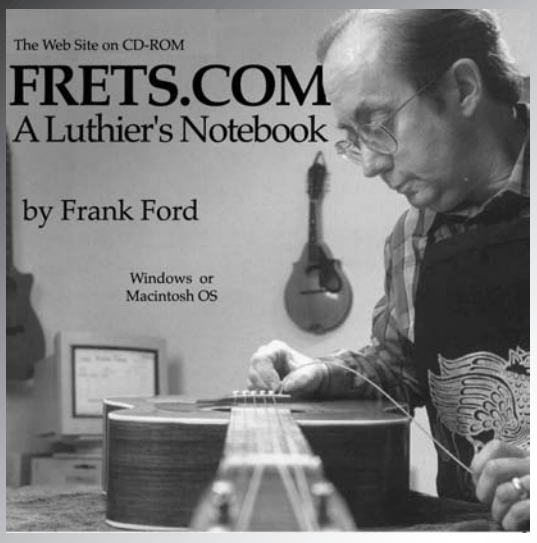
Most flatpickers are familiar with Grisman's version of the tune. Grisman played the tune in Dm, added a few different chord changes, and wrote a bridge to the tune. If you are not familiar with Grisman's version, you'll get a taste of it here as we present Wyatt Rice's interpretation of it in this column. If you are not familiar with Django's version see John Carlini's column in this issue or Dix Bruce's column in Vol. 4, No. 6.

When asked to describe the difference between the two versions, John Carlini said, "The main difference is that David plays it more like Dawg music stylistically. It morphed into a Dawg tune."

What Wyatt plays here is the Grisman version of "Minor Swing" that he learned from Grisman's *Hot Dog* recording. That recording featured Tony Rice on guitar and included Stephane Grappelli on violin. Wyatt says, "This has been one of my favorite Dawg style songs since I heard it on his record."

The transcription presented here is the "slow version" which Wyatt plays on the audio companion to this issue. On the up-tempo "jam" version we have included on the audio companion, Wyatt is joined by Rushad Eggleston, a cello student at the Berklee School of Music in Boston, MA.





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Minor Swing

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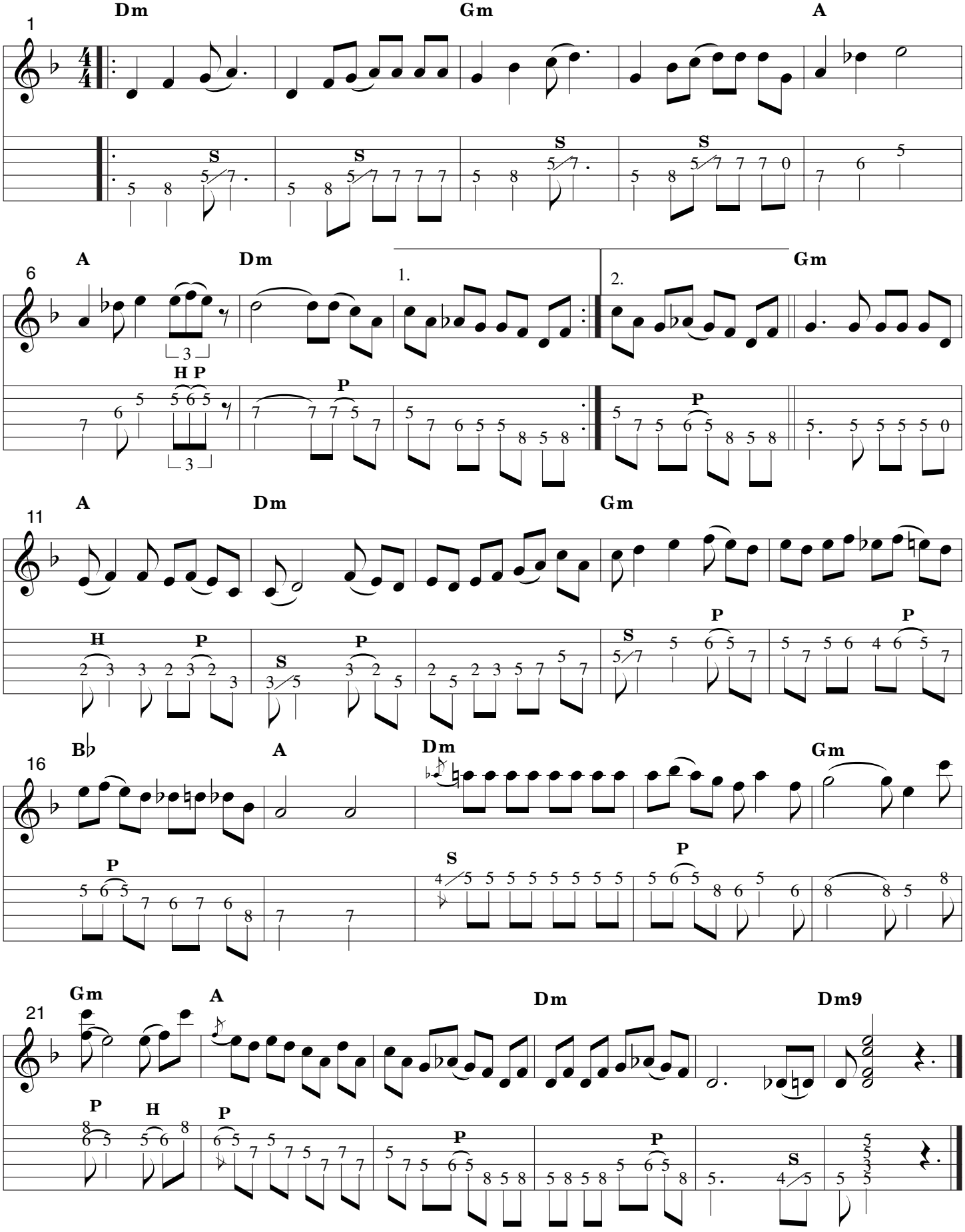
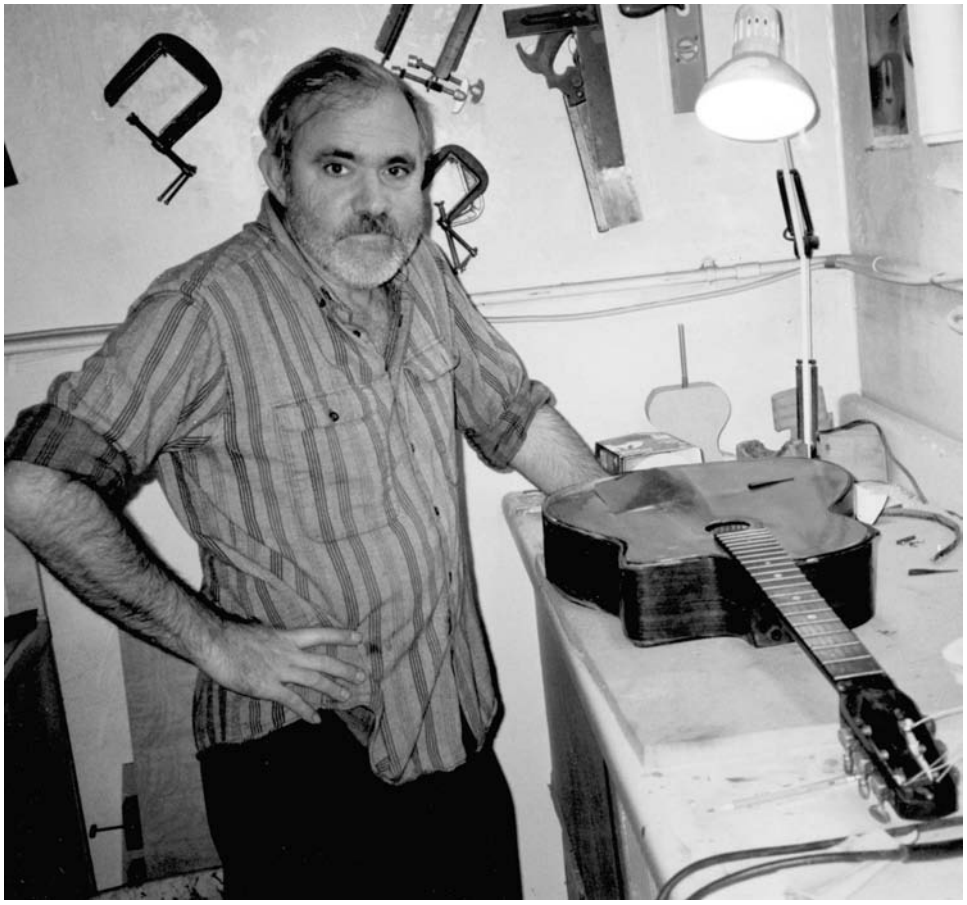

Dell'Arte Instruments

by
David McCarty

Recreating Django's Magic Box



John Kinnard of Dell'Arte Instruments

At the guitar workshop at last year's IBMA, I had the opportunity to ask Bryan Sutton what had sparked his interest in Django-style Gypsy jazz guitar playing. It began, he explained, when he first picked up a replica of the unique-toned Selmer-style guitar favored by Django and the other Gypsy players and started making those distinctive sounds himself. The guitar simply opened a doorway to new kinds of guitar music unavailable to him of a traditional flattop, steel-stringed guitar. It was the sound, that plaintive, honky, dry tone and loud, percussive attack that captivated him, he said simply.

Alain Cola and John Kinnard of Dell'Arte Instruments in sun-washed San Diego, California know that sound about as well as anyone in the world, referring to it as almost a "Third World sound." In a small production shop, Dell'Arte today turns out about five Selmer-style guitars and other instruments each week, and they've seen explosive growth in the demand for these delicate-looking, fiercely unique steel-string guitars in the last several years.

We started with three dealers and now we're up to 55," explains Cola, a Frenchman who plays Django-style guitar beautifully with the aptly named Hot Club of San Diego. "The market is going up, definitely."

How a French musician and a former lapidary came together to form a company to build exotic Gypsy jazz guitars is quite a tale. John Kinnard grew up in Southern California in the late 1960s at a time when guitarmaking was becoming popular. Breedlove, Taylor, and Goodall all started building instruments, and inspired by their efforts and a grandfather who did instrument work, Kinnard started building a few "amateurish" instruments and doing repair work. By the mid-70s, he was an accomplished repairman and was building instruments he felt could satisfy serious musicians.

In 1978, however, his career in the musical instrument field took a detour when he moved to Oregon and worked as a ranch hand. "I kept doing a little repair work in my house," he said. His twin sister who had stayed in California eventually convinced him to join her jewelry-making business, and by 1985, he went from cutting heads of cattle on the range to cutting gemstones in a vice. "I was very happy doing that. It was very creative work. I had free rein of design as the fabricator of gold and silver and cutting stones for the settings I'd made," he explained. But the severe recession of the early 90s hit Southern California's high-tech industrial base hard, and jewelry sales plummeted.

Needing work, Kinnard approached the Taylor Guitar Co. hoping to utilize his repair and luthiery skills there, and was hired in as an assembler in the body department. His job involved taking the pre-bent sides, gluing in the kerfing, gluing down the top and back, binding the guitar and sanding it for finishing. "When I left, I was doing nine guitar bodies a day. I'd build three, bind three and sand three. It was very hard on my wrists and hands, pretty arduous," he reported. Despite his long days at work, though, he also had resurrected his own shop in his spare time. After four and a half years at Taylor, the economic upturn convinced him to go back to making his own instruments full-time.

Under the name Finegold Instruments, Kinnard built mandolins, mandolas and guitars, selling them privately and through a single dealer. After about a year, Kinnard met Cola, who had been developing a business to build and distribute the Selmer-style guitars he loved so well. Starting in 1997, Cola had been building his Dell'Arte guitars in Tijuana, Mexico through a local manufacturer, but had been frustrated by the inconsistent quality of the finished instruments. After connecting with Kinnard, Cola dropped the Mexican line of instruments in

1999 to concentrate on U.S.-made guitars and other stringed instruments.

One problem in building guitars in this style is a lack of blueprints and other engineering details on their construction. Only the Selmer company (better know for making clarinets, saxophones, and other wind and brass instruments) had ever built the sharp cut-away, bent-top guitars created by luthier Mario Macafferi in any quantity, and original guitars were quite rare in the U.S. Cola had obtained the blueprints for a 1932 Selmer and used that as the template for his own guitars. But much experimentation on bracing, top thickness and other factors was needed to refine the finished product. In addition, the original guitars used unusual tuning machines and have a unique metal tailpiece with an ebony insert that are hard to obtain. "Little by little, I did the research and found the sources I needed," Cola explained. Today, Dell'Arte Instruments has sold more than 500 instruments, 400 of which are Selmer-style guitars.

Kinnard's expertise as a luthier helped tremendously in this effort, as did his experience restoring a 1947 Selmer (serial number 665) that had been damaged in a flood. "The original Selmers were pretty crudely made, but they have a unique tone. It's a Third World tone, almost," he said. Together, the two men experimented and refined their design, changing top thicknesses, adding and eliminating braces to the original Selmer bracing pattern, and making other changes intended to produce an instrument with consistent tone and playability. "It's an ongoing process," Cola said.

For example, many tops on the original Selmer guitars are "dangerously thin," Cola reported, so his guitars use slightly heavier tops and a modified bracing to achieve the same sound with less chance of splitting or warping. Since these instruments have a "stressed top" design that incorporated a slight bend in the lower half of the top, finding a way to manufacture them consistently has been a big challenge. Another problem they've overcome is the issue of playability. The oval-hole model guitars preferred by lead players in the Django style have a scale length approximately 26.5 inches long: an inch longer than a typical Martin dreadnought. The guitars also utilize a special silver-wound string with less tension than normal strings, and the bridge design is a solid piece of ebony positioned between two glued-in wings on the bass and treble sides. Bringing all these elements together to consistently produce a guitar with an action that is high enough to get the full sound out of the instrument but low enough to be comfortable to play has been one major challenge they've solved.

Dell'Arte's guitar line is evolving, but includes the two basic guitar styles—a 14-fret oval hole model used mostly for lead and a 12-fret D hole model for rhythm—in several different varieties of trim and tonewoods. As a compromise guitar for players needing to play both lead and rhythm, they produce a 14-fret D hole model. In addition, Dell'Arte is producing a signature series of guitars endorsed by Gypsy jazz stars such as Jimmy Rosenberg and Angelo Debarre, with other signature models expected in the future. Kinnard also builds the only mandocellos based on the Selmer guitar design.

For a flatpicker looking to begin exploring Gypsy jazz style guitar, Cola says the 14-fret D design offers a good balance between round, lush chords and sweet, stinging lead tones. Dell'Arte provided one of these models to *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* for a test, and the instrument proved true to its design. Expertly made and finished, the guitar arrived beautifully set up and played wonderfully right out of the shipping box. Lead tones just exploded out of the large soundhole, and the guitar produced very warm, full chord tones, especially up the neck where simple tritone chord positions are frequently played in the Gypsy style. All in all, it was very impressive.

Cola said the biggest hurdle for flatpickers is simply learning how to produce a good tone on these guitars, which truly are a hybrid between a standard flattop and an archtop guitar design. The player must use a heavier pick and play with the right hand free of the top, wrist broken to angle the pick down at the strings. "These guitars are capable of an incredible array of sounds; the challenge is up to the player to find the sweet spot," Cola said. "It's there, they just have to find it."

Alain Cola of Dell'Arte

Dell'Arte Instrument's Selmer-style guitars carry a manufacturer's suggested retail price of $2,300 to $3,900, with street prices running about $500 below that. The company's website at www.dellarteinstruments.com should be up and running by the time this article is published, and Cola said the company is developing its own line of strings for Gypsy jazz. Dell'Arte also is becoming a major importer and distributor of Gypsy jazz CDs.

"Our ambition is to expand the genre of Gypsy jazz. That's why we sell the CDs, because the more CDs we sell, the more guitars we'll sell," Cola predicted. "To spread this kind of music has been my mission from the start. I want to get as many people involved in this kind of music as I can."

Flatpicking Guitar

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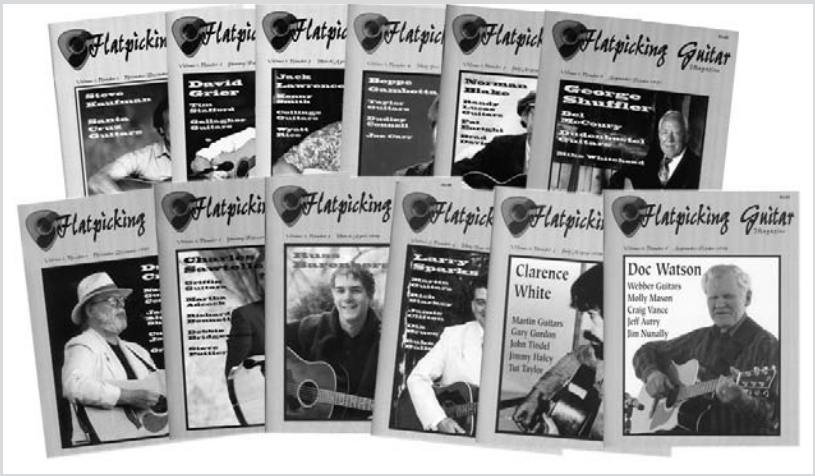
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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

Stumble

For this Django issue I've decided to tab out both the rhythm and first solo to "Stumble," a swingy Vassar Clements confection that I recorded on *No Frets Barred*, my first solo album (released by Flying Fish in 1982 and just now available on CD from my own label).

Though I've only dabbled in swing over the years, I have tried to incorporate the feel of the music when I play it. And to help me do that I cleave to an image of Django's sound in my head when I'm playing a swing tune. Hopefully you will hear those echoes in this arrangement. (And if not, at least it will be something you can actually play!)

Vassar recorded "Stumble" on a 1973 Rounder disc called *Crossing the Catskills* (with David Bromberg on guitar). Like many swing tunes, the rhythm part consists entirely of closed chord forms (which I've diagrammed to the right), and the lead involes several up-the-neck positions . It's also true that, because of the many syncopations and staccato notes, it's trickier learning a new swing solo from tab than most fiddle tunes. So, if you were ever considering ordering the companion CD for an issue of the magazine, this one would be a prime candidate.

Good luck.

Brooklyn Bluegrass Maestro, Orrin Star is an award-winning guitar, banjo and mandolin player. The 1976 National Flatpicking Champion, he has toured and recorded widely, appeared on A Prairie Home Companion and is the author of Hot Licks for Bluegrass Guitar. *See www.flatpick.com/ostar.*

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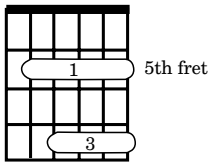
The Barred "D"



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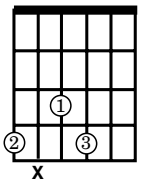
The Diminished Chords



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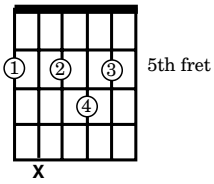
The A7



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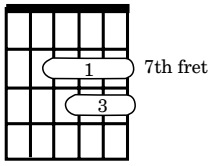

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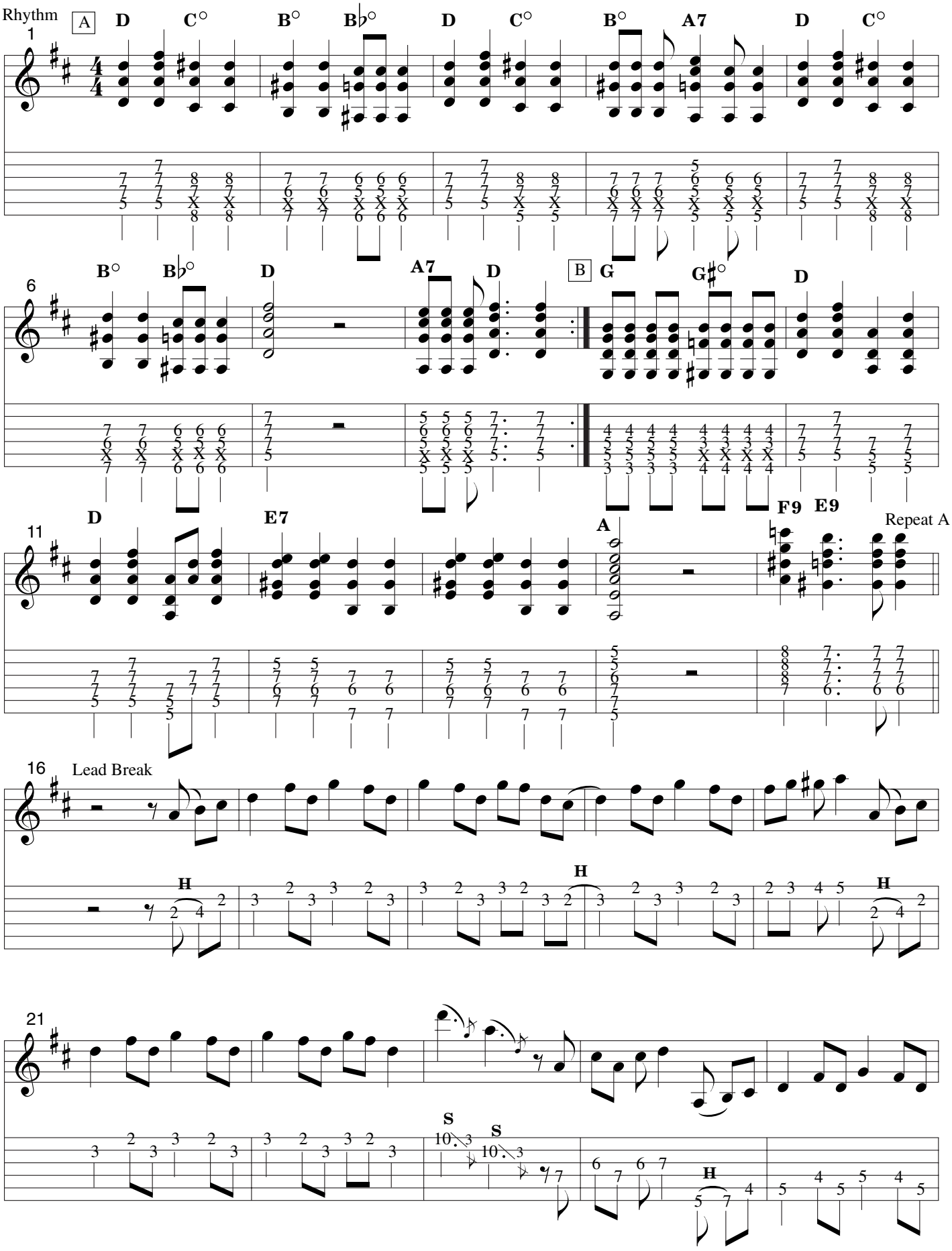
Stumble

Arranged by Orrin Star

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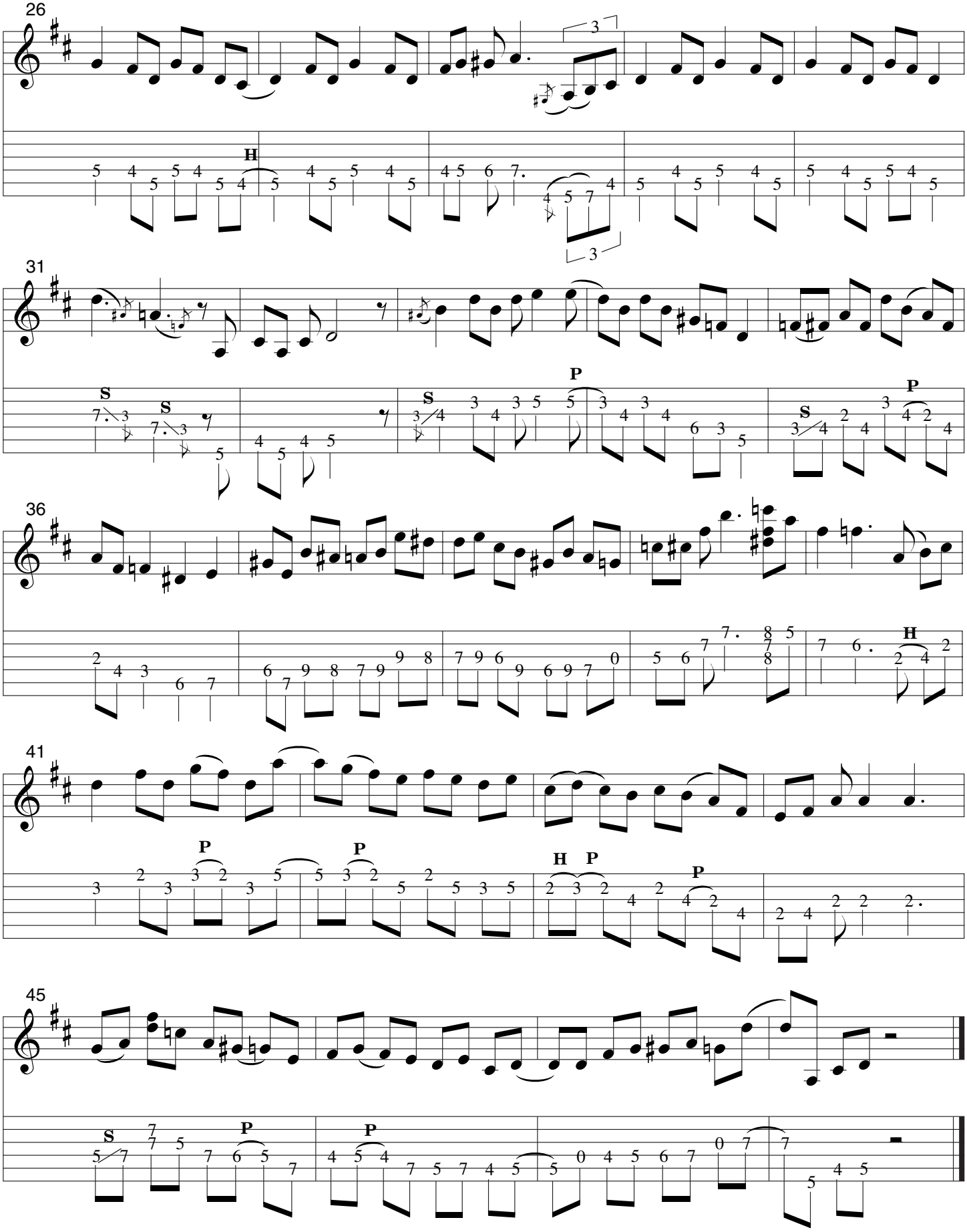
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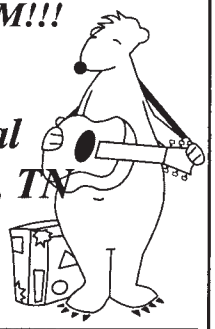

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"Dinah"

by Dix Bruce

In past columns we've learned several songs I've referred to as "standards." A "standard" is a song widely known by audiences and played frequently by musicians. Standards are songs that everyone recognizes.

Each style of music has its own set of standards. In classic country music you'll find standards like "Jambalaya," "Crazy," Folsom Prison Blues," and "Take Me Home Country Road." Bluegrass players and listeners love "Blue Moon of Kentucky," "How Mountain Girls Can Love," "Rocky Top," and "Foggy Mountain Breakdown." Flatpickers have made "Black Mountain Rag," "Temperance Reel," "Billy in the Lowground," and "The Gold Rush" into standards. If you're playing basic 50s rock, you'll need to know songs like "Heartbreak Hotel," Johnny B. Goode," "Dream," "Peggy Sue," and "Long Tall Sally."

Songs become standards because of their popularity with audiences. If a song is a hit, it gets played, people recognize it and request it from musicians.

Because of its inclusion in the film *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?*, the song "Man of Constant Sorrow" is a new bluegrass/Old time standard. Bluegrass audiences have discovered it anew and people who aren't necessarily bluegrass fans have a new song they recognize as bluegrass. Almost thirty years ago the same thing happened with "Dueling Banjos" from the movie *Deliverance*. Before that, the film *Bonnie and Clyde* made "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" a nation-wide hit and a standard among non-bluegrass speaking civilians.

Of course a song doesn't have to be in a movie to become a hit or a standard. These are just three examples from the bluegrass genre which I find fascinating. Neither is what one would call typical of the pop music style. Still, these songs got presented to the public in such a way that they resonated and millions of listeners discovered something new and different. It just goes to show you that anything can happen. Who would have thought that a CD like the soundtrack to *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?* could be nominated for the Record of the Year Grammy with very little air play or attention from the pop country powers that be? Hope springs eternal. Keep writing, playing, and recording the music you love!

Jazz players have always relied heavily on standards and like the rest of the music world, different sub styles of jazz have their own favorites. Dixieland, Latin, Bebop, Cool, Funk, Fusion, Swing, etc. each have their own unique repertoire of standards.

However, if you look at jazz as a whole, with all its branches and cousins, the pop music of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s is the dominant well from which a vast majority of the repertoire is drawn. That's why it's so important to recognize and learn standards. It's not easy if you aren't of the generation that heard these songs constantly on the radio, at dances, in Broadway shows, at concerts. It takes a little study.

Learning and teaching these standards in the different genres was my motivation for creating BackUP TRAX. So far I've published five titles through Mel Bay: *Old Time & Fiddle Tunes*; *Swing & Jazz*; *Traditional Jazz & Dixieland*; *Early Jazz & Hot Tunes*; and the newest title, *Basic Blues for Guitar* (Check them out at www.musixnow.com). I collect sheet music from these earlier eras as a source for these old standards. Where else could I find the verse to "Lady Be Good" or the original melody to "The Sheik of Araby"?

In this column we'll learn the melody, lyrics, accompaniment chords, and a guitar solo to the popular standard "Dinah," a song from 1925 composed by Harry Akst with lyrics by Sam Lewis and Joe Young. Django Reinhardt recorded "Dinah" at least once or twice, and so did the great guitarist Oscar Aleman. There are several wonderful CD collections currently available by each artist which include recordings of the song. I recommend the incredibly low priced Django Reinhardt 5-CD box available which sells for about $25.00 (yes, $25.00!) from JSP Records. It's called *Django Reinhardt—The Classic Early Recordings in Chronological Order* (JSP Jazz Box JSPCCD901). Acoustic Disc, David Grisman's label, has a comprehensive Oscar Aleman 2-CD collection entitled *Oscar Aleman—Swing Guitar Masterpieces* (Acoustic Disc ACD-29). Listen and study how each of these great guitarists approaches "Dinah." If you can't find them locally, a good source for these CDs is Down Home Music, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530 (510) 525-2129.

I've written out "Dinah" in the key of F. Jazz musicians, and horn players in particular, tend to favor the flat keys (F, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db) while string players gravitate toward the sharp keys (G, D, A, E, B). For years I avoided the flat keys but when I finally found myself in the position of having to play in different keys, I learned in a hurry under a fair amount of pressure! Since you'll ultimately want to be familiar with all the keys and be able to play in any of them, it's a good idea to start now.

The first version of "Dinah" shows the melody in a closed position near the bottom of the neck. Since it's in a closed position, you can move the melody up or down the neck to different keys quite easily. Once you memorize the melody as shown, practice moving it up to G, Ab, Bb, and so on. Keep your basic fretting hand position in tact as you move it up the neck. It'll be a challenge at first, but mastering this technique will free you to play in any key.

As you're learning the lower closed position melody, make sure you can play the accompaniment chords also. Most forms will be familiar to you from past columns. Like the closed position melody, these chords don't have any open strings and are moveable up and down the neck. Once you can play them as written, move them up to G, Ab, Bb, and so on. Record the chord progressions at slow and moderate tempos in the different keys and use them as a rhythm track to practice the melodies (and later the solo) in the new keys.

In the bridge of "Dinah," (M 17) I use a Dm chord with a descending bass line. Play the bass note and follow it with a strum. Some of the stretches for the bass notes may take a little getting used to.

Next is the solo. In composing it I tried to stay as close to the melody as possible. I also positioned it an octave above the melody you've been learning. I wanted to give you a workout in both regions and encourage you to see the relationships between them. In M 25-27 I'm alluding to the melody of

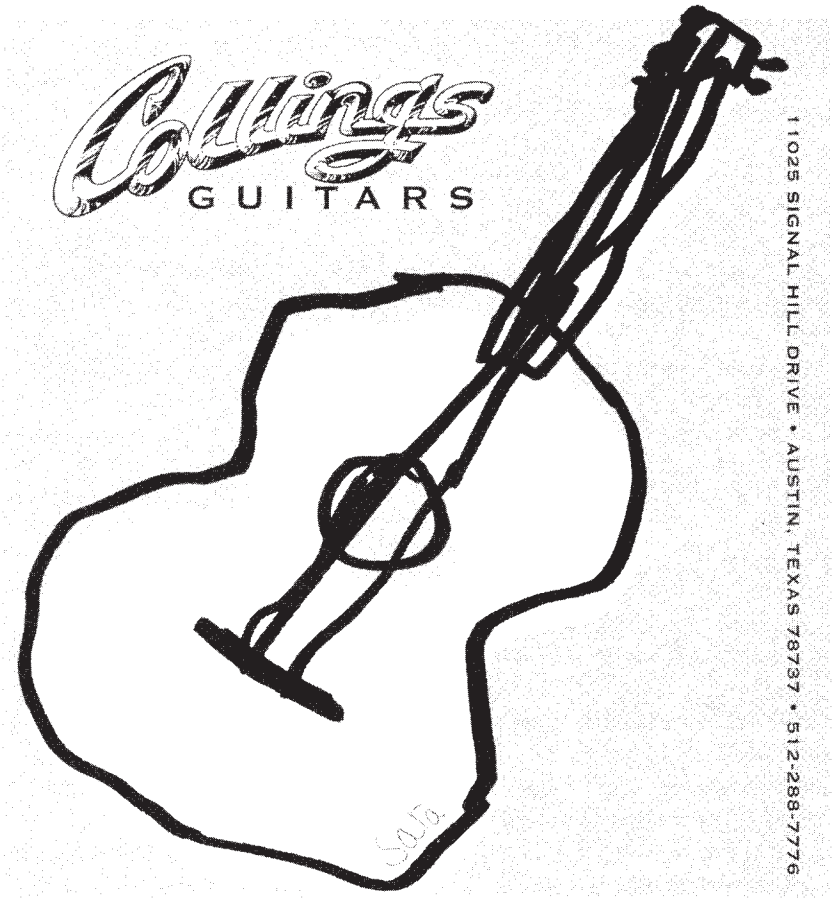
another standard, "Brazil." Now for some homework. Once you can play the solo as written, try transposing it to G, Ab, Bb and beyond. You may run out of reachable fingerboard, but take it as far as you can. Use your taped backup chords and play along. (Of course you can also play along with my chordal accompaniment on the CD companion for this issue.) I know that moving the solos around will be challenge, but again, as with the melody, hold the basic fretting hand shape, work slowly and patiently, and you'll discover great things. Now the harder part.

When you've mastered all of the above, try transposing the solo and lower it an octave to the region of the original melody. Next try moving the original lower neck melody up an octave to the region of the original solo. Try to relate the hand position of the original melody to your transposed original solo and vice versa. Since the solo is based on the melody, the melody and solo will be closely related.

WHEW! Too much hard work, huh? Wasn't music supposed to be fun? Well, sometimes you have to sweat a little. The pay off is that these exercises will lead to wonderful places and help you gain an ever greater understanding of how music and the guitar work. It's important that you go through the process of transposing to teach your hands and brain what it's all about. Any effort you put in will be greatly rewarded. If you find yourself completely at sea as far as positions and notes go, you can download the music and TAB for these last two exercises from my website: musixnow.com. Just click on the "Free Downloads" link and look for the flatpicking guitar music in the listing.

Finally, transpose these octave shifted parts to the different keys. Good luck!

Dix's new website is up and running: musixnow.com It features information on all his books, CDs, and videos, information on Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally, and lots of music to download. His newest book and play-along CD set for Mel Bay Publications (due to be available by the time you read this) is BackUP TRAX: Basic Blues for Guitar. *Available online or TOLL FREE: 1-877-219-0441. Mel Bay is set to release Dix's book of Jerry Garcia Transcriptions from the Garcia/Grisman recording* Shady Grove *(excerpted in* Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*) in early 2002.*



Dinah

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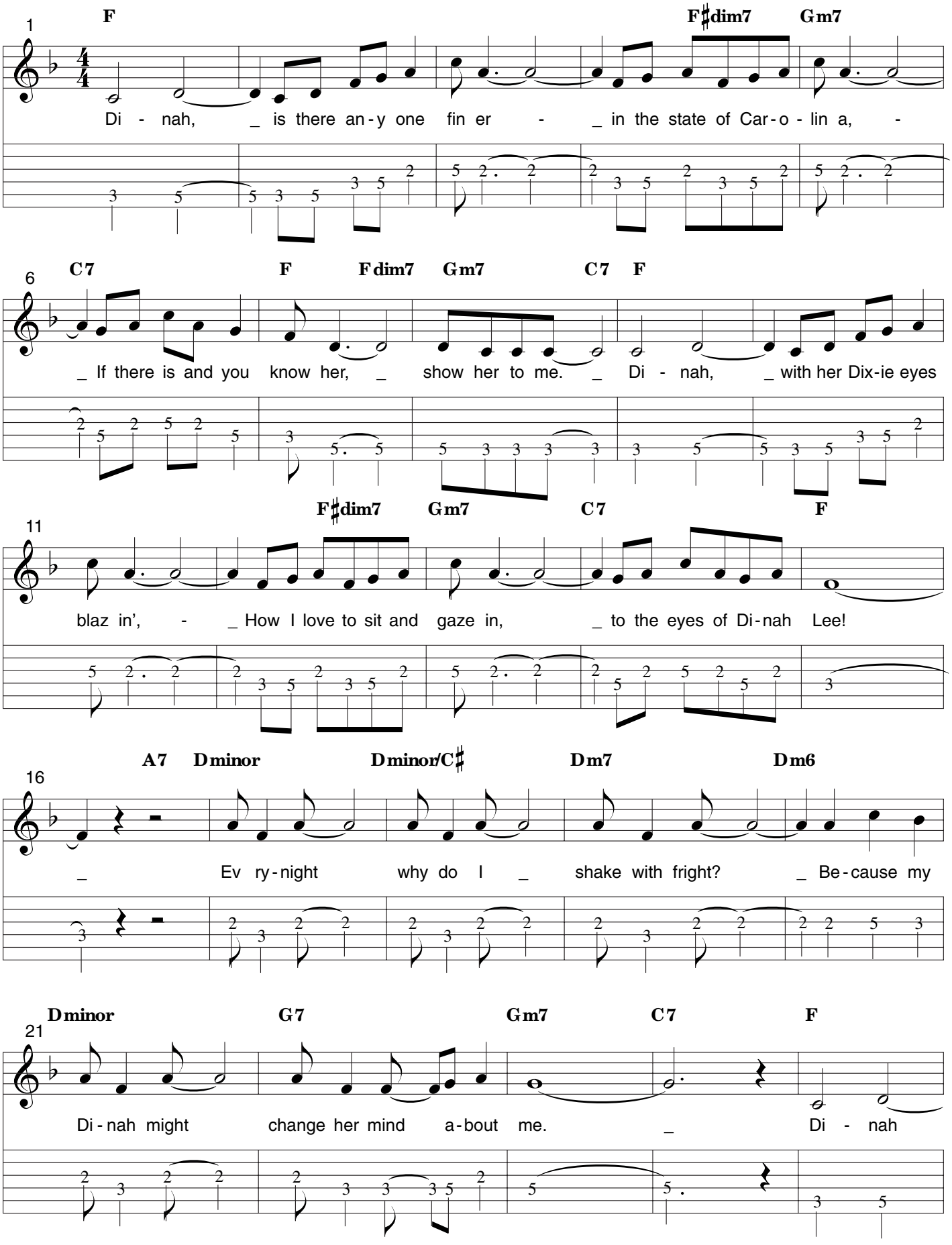
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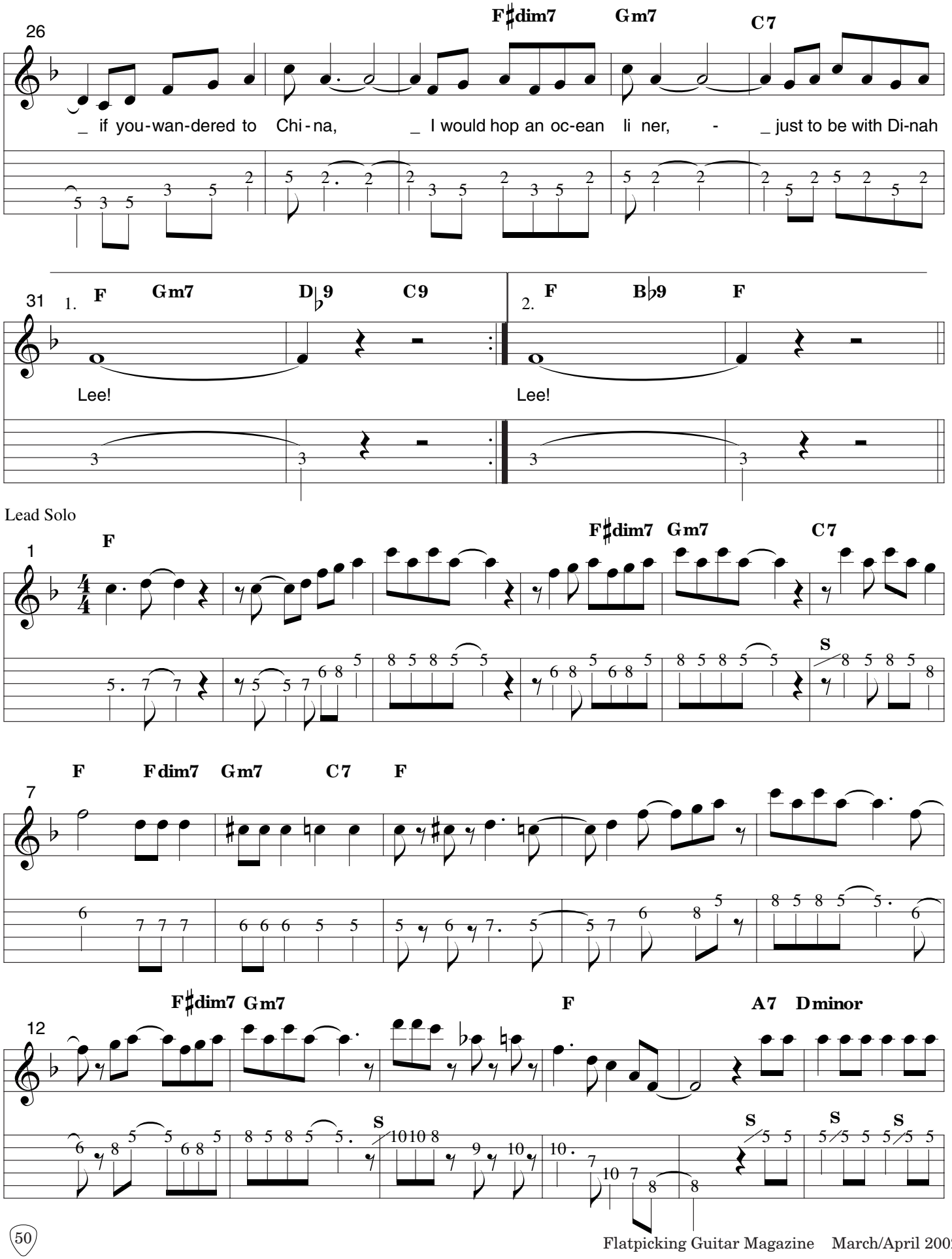
26
F♯dim7
Gm7
C7
_ if you-wan-dered to Chi-na, _ I would hop an oc-ean li ner, - _ just to be with Di-nah
31
1.
F
Gm7
D♭9
C9
Lee!
2.
F
B♭9
F
Lee!
Lead Solo
1
F
F♯dim7
Gm7
C7
S
7
F
Fdim7
Gm7
C7
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12
F♯dim7
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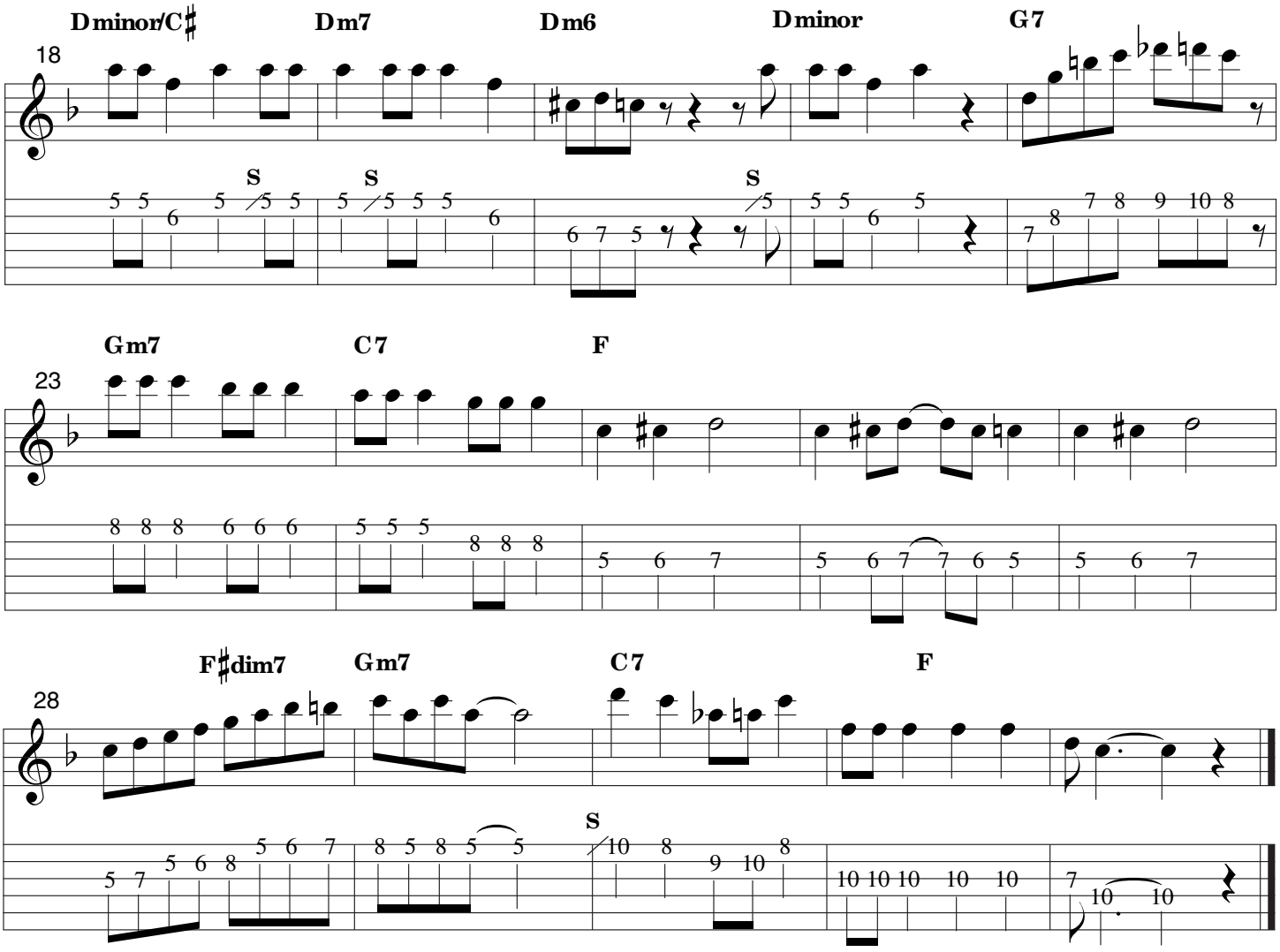

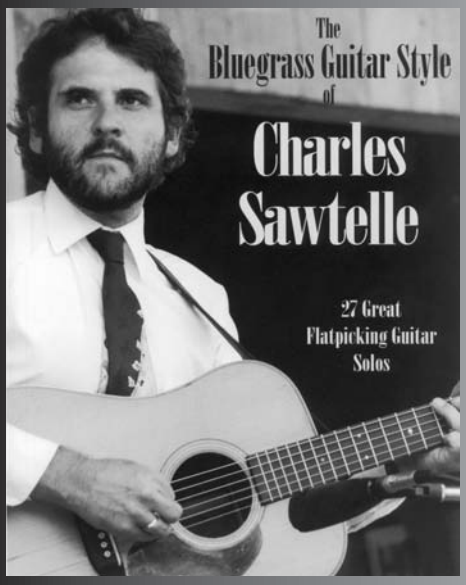

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Inspiration, Technique, and Django

By the time you have arrived at this point in the magazine, assuming that you read more or less sequentially through the preceding articles, there is very little new information for me to add about the life of Django Reinhardt.

You have read about his handicap, caused by a fire as a teenager. Despite the terrible handicap, Django persevered, and evolved a unique guitar style, using mainly two fingers. Exposed to American jazz recordings from greats such as Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, Django was said to have been able to hear a recording once, and play it on the guitar 5 minutes later.

The dedication of this issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* to Django provided me with an opportunity to dig out some of the material that Django played. Each time I study Django I come away with a fresh approach to improvisation. I always find it astonishing that he was able to execute the musical technique using only two fingers and the thumb on the left hand.

Other Artists and Musical Growth

We study the music of other artists for many reasons: inspiration, musical growth, because we like the way that they play, and want to copy them, and so on. Indeed we are fortunate to live in an age when we have recordings and transcriptions that put within our reach the music of artists of previous generations. Originally available on 78RPM recordings many of these valuable sessions are now being re-released on CD format.

It is not enough to merely copy another artist. I want you to learn to analyze music, to break it down into logical patterns and licks. These patterns can be practiced and studied individually, and then be incorporated into your own music.

Exercises for Some of Django's Licks

Django, although in some ways unschooled in music, used all aspects of music in his playing. Regular readers of this column will recall that we have discussed triads; major, minor, augmented, and diminished scales; inversions; floaty scales; and the difference in time between quarter note, triplets, eighth, and sixteenth notes. All of these musical devices are found in Django's music.

This first exercise is a diminished run. This exercise is similar to cross-picking in the bluegrass genre and begins with an upstroke on the high E-string. Note that the left hand fingering is the same as the D7 chord; as used in this context however, it sounds like a diminished chord resolving to a G chord.

The semitone scale in Exercise 2 is one that can be thrown in for a "splash" lick, or just to startle the listener with something different. Playing on the 4th and 5th frets, it can be used over a D passage (originally a D6 chord). I have included a return to G from the ending of the second improvised break in Django's version of "Dinah." Note the similarity to the often used bluegrass ending lick in G.

Django frequently used octaves in his music. Exercise three is a simple octave exercise in C major. The second half of the exercise is the same note, repeated using the upper octave. Note that when playing these octaves, you must dampen the middle string by allowing the index finger to slightly touch it, keeping it from ringing.

An arpeggio is a "broken" chord, or a chord in which the notes are played one at a time, instead of all at once. The exercise shown below is two of Django's frequently used arpeggio's. The first one uses open strings, the second is entirely closed and can be moved to any position desired. In the example they are both in G. Practice playing them in the time shown, then experiment with other timing on your own.

About the Tune:

After studying several recordings you will notice that Django frequently approached a solo using all of the techniques presented in the exercises above, as well as other musical devices. In the tune that follows, I have intentionally selected a tune that I never heard Django play. That doesn't mean that he didn't play it, as the tune was popular during his lifetime. Rather than exactly transcribing on of his solos, I want you to think about approaching a "Djangoesque" solo, perhaps in the way that Django might have done it, using (1) single string lines and arpeggios, (2) octaves, and (3) chords.

"Bye Bye Blues" is one of my favorite tunes. Although written and usually played in C, I have chosen to transpose it to G. As an aside, a wonderful version from Mark Cosgrove in C was published in an earlier issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*.

For this version, I have selected some of Django's licks from the exercises above, and show a way to do the tune like Django "might" have approached it.

Have fun, and keep on pickin'!

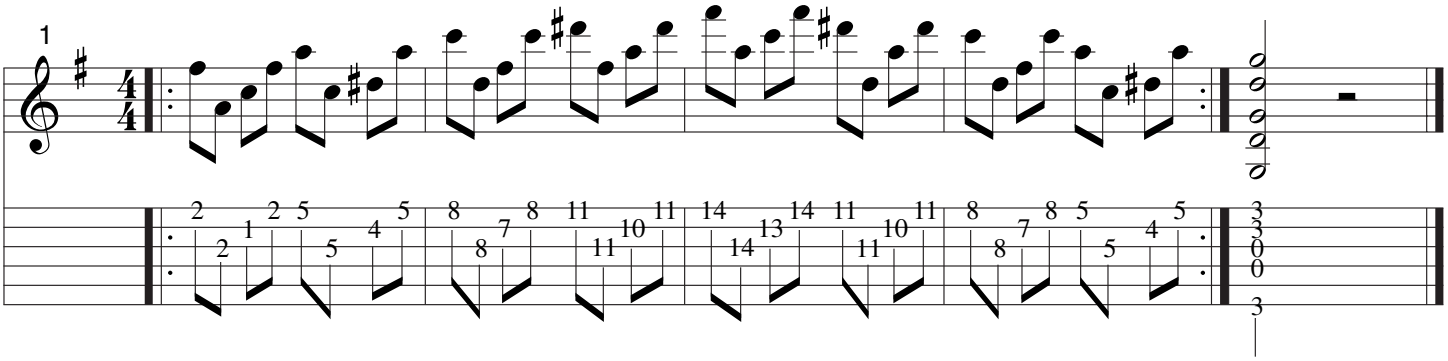
About the Author:

Mike spent the entire football season this year in the studio, and consequently missed all of the important games except for the Colorado victory over Nebraska.

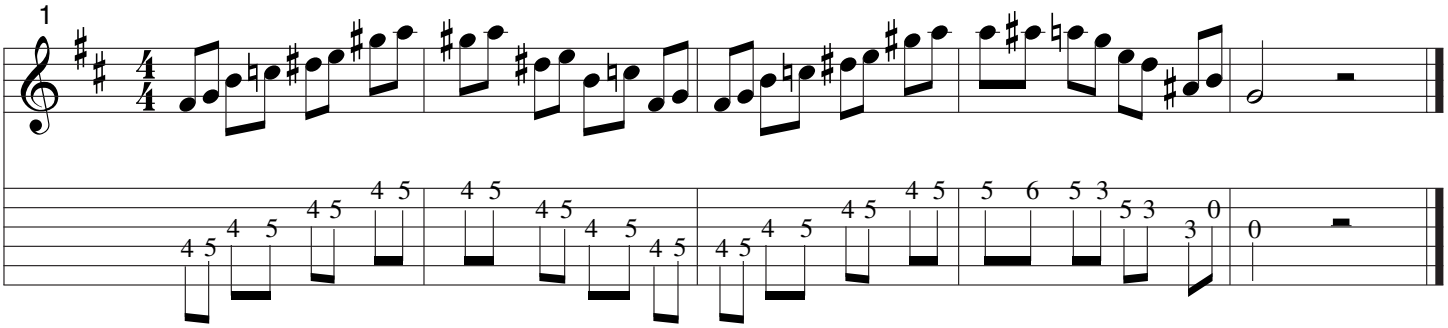
His new CD will be available in February of 2002, and features two of his original tunes which were published in this magazine, the fiddle work of Paul Shelasky, banjo work of Pete Wernick, and songwriting, vocals, and mandolin of his wife Bertye.

Check the Colorado Springs newspaper listings for the "Bertye Maddux Band". His "Ol Banjo" CD is available through Flatpicking Guitar Magazine. *Please contact him with questions or comments c/o this magazine.*

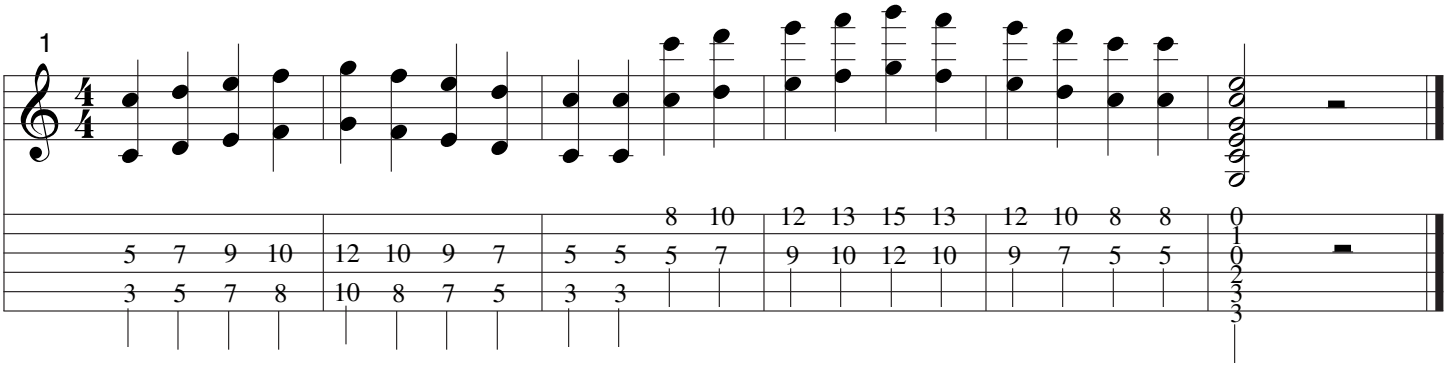
Exercise 1: Diminshed Chord and Run - Repeat as Desired



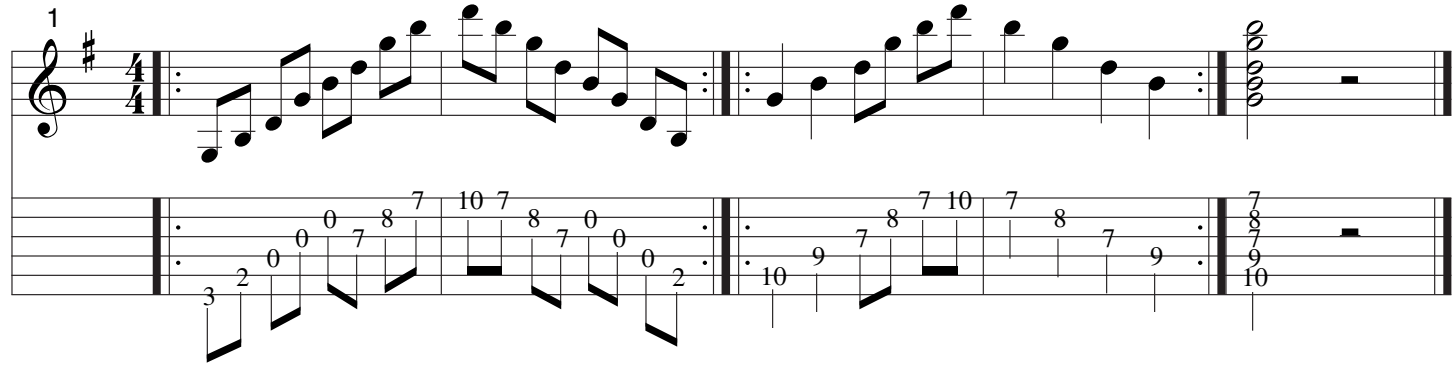
Exercise 2: Django's Semitone Chordal Run and Ending Lick from "Dinah"



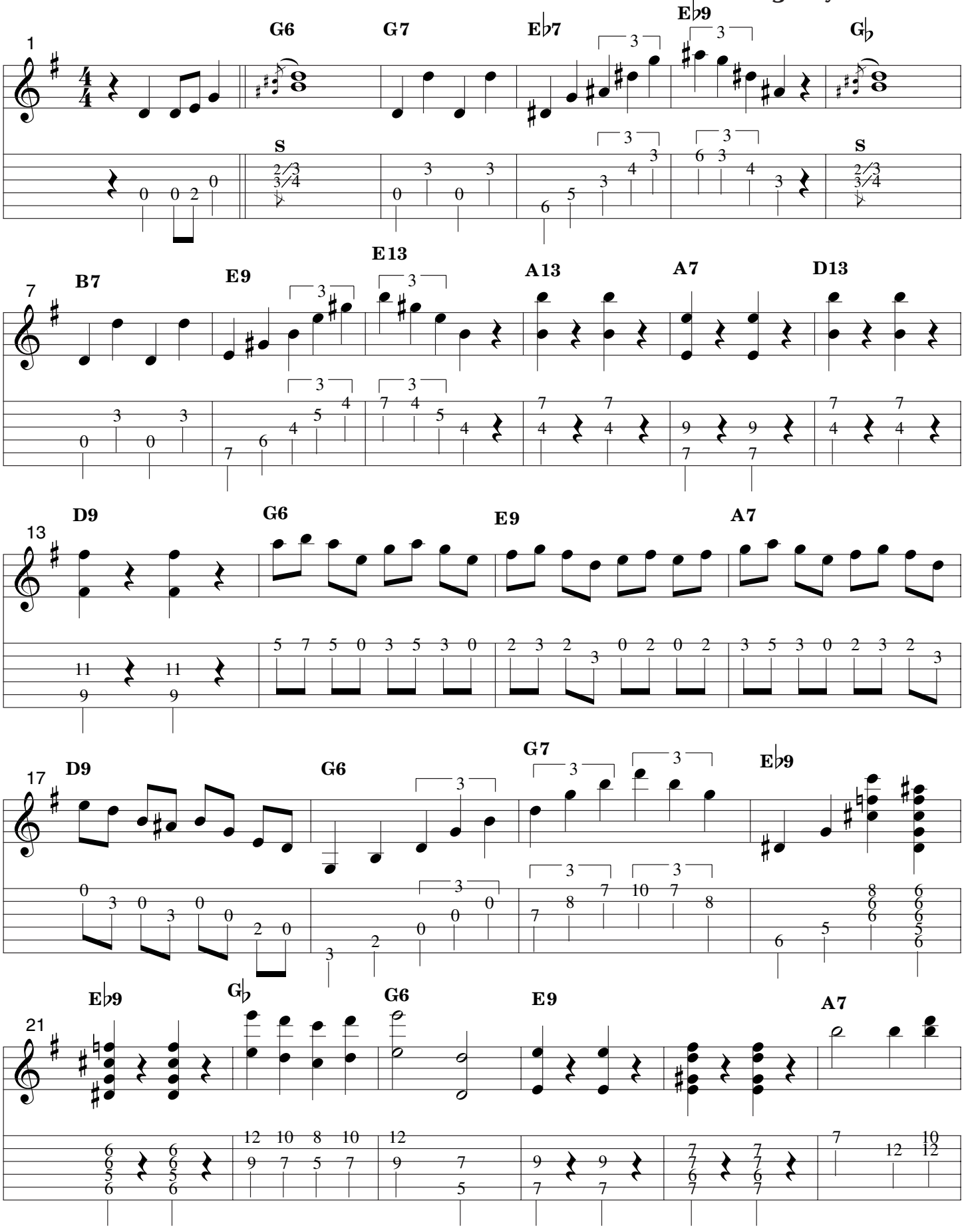
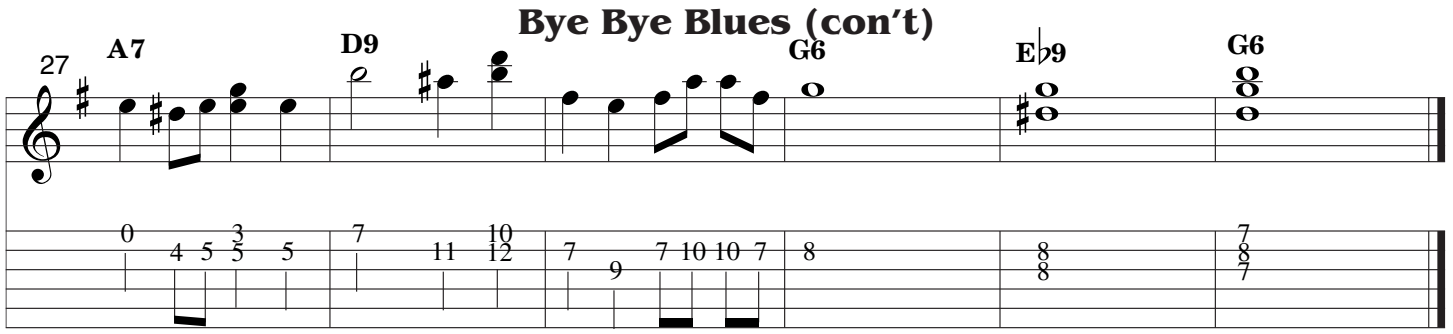
Exercise 3: Octave Exercise



Exercise 4: Arpeggio Exercise



Bye Bye Blues

Arranged by Mike Maddux



Django On The Web

Welcome to *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's* On the Web! In this issue we'll visit web sites referenced in this issue of *FGM*, which include artist sites, fan sites, luthiers, accessories and documentation on Django. It's interesting to note that many of the sites we'll visit are not located in the United States, which is wonderful because we'll get a glimpse of musicians and fans from Australia to Great Britain to San Francisco who are obsessed Gypsy Guitar Music! Enjoy!

"Hot Club of San Francisco" is located in the Bay Area. Recordings and performance data are listed on this web site as well as band info and contact info. http://www.hcsf.com/ "Harmonious Wail's" site contains lots of background info and photos of the band as well as listings of gigs. They are based in Madison, WI. http://www.wail.com/

"Wegen Guitar Picks" - He makes plectrums for Gypsy Jazz players as well as bluegrass flatpickers. http://www.wegenpicks.com/

"The Robin Nolan Trio" was formed in 1992 and has performed all over the world. The web site contains info on the RNT's recordings, performances and background info. There are links on this page to many Django festivals all over the world. This site is a great resource on Django style music! http://www.robinnolantrio.com/

"John Le Voi Guitars" - Mr. Le Voi has specialized in Selmer style guitars since 1978. http://www.levoi.freeserve.co.uk/John_Le_Voi_Gy/indexx.html

"Dell Arte Guitars" - There is very little information on the web site, but you might want to keep an eye on it in the future. www.dellarteinstruments.com

My good friend "Alfonso Ponticelli" is based in Chicago. Besides being an accomplished Gypsy jazz player and teacher, he is also an accomplished flamenco guitarist, dulcimer player and flatpicker. http://home.earthlink.net/~ponticelli/

"Hot Club Records" contains a wealth of information about Gypsy Jazz, including artist info and a catalog of recordings they offer. http://www.nordi.no/music/hcr/

"R. & F. Charle Musical Instruments" resides in Paris. Francois Charles is the author of "THE STORY OF SELMER MACCAFERRI GUITARS". What a great book! http://www.rfcharle.com/

"The Django Reinhardt Swing Page" contains articles, links to artists, events, instrument builders as well as online instruction to learn Django style guitar. http://www.hotclub.co.uk/

"Gypsy Jazz Guitar" contains links to resources on the Gypsy Jazz Guitar Web ring and the Yahoo newsgroup on the Gypsy Jazz Guitar: (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gypsyjazzguitar) http://www.gypsyjazzguitar.com/

"Pearl Django" is based in the Seattle, Washington area. This group has been performing and recording since 1994. The site has info on their CD's as well as info on the group and a performance schedule. http://www.pearldjango.com/

"Shelly D. Park Guitars" - Ms. Park plays guitar in the Seattle group, Pearl Django. Her guitars are very highly regarded by many players! http://www.parkguitars.com/

"The Rosenberg Trio's" web site contains information on their CD's, bookings, festivals, and group info. http://www.rosenberg-trio.com/

"The Gypsy Hot Club of Australia". According to the web site, the gentleman who runs this site also has a weekly radio show in Sydney, Australia primarily devoted to Gypsy Music (from Hot Club Swing to Hungarian & Russian Gypsy styles) & Klezmer Music. Very cool! http://members.tripod.com/~thehotclub/index.html

"Eimers Guitars", which is based in the Netherlands, constructs Selmer style guitars. The "Stochelo Rosenberg Signature Model" is their latest design. http://www.eimers-guitars.nl/

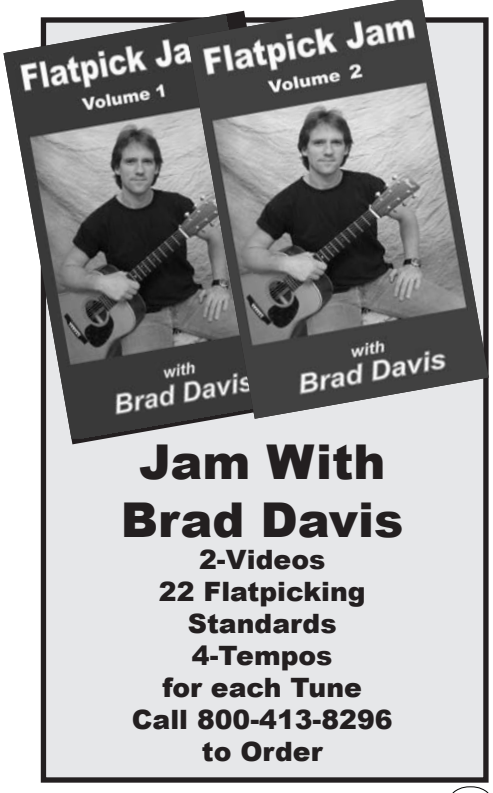
"Mango For Django" is a Colorado Springs, CO based gypsy jazz, calypso and jump swing band. My only complaint about this site is that anglefire hosts it, which means there are popup windows galore! http://www.angelfire.com/ma2/mango/indexus.html

"Club Django in Toronto" has a nice site with info on recordings, bookings, etc... http://clubdjangotoronto.com/

"Hot Gypsy Swing" from Charleston, South Carolina has a nice web site with info on the band as well as bookings. http://www.djangodjazz.com/

"Francois Rousseau's documentation Centre" contains a wealth of information in French and English on recordings, transcriptions, session listings, paintings, etc... by Django Reinhardt. This s a wonderful site! http://pages.infinit.net/reinhard/

Following links from each of the web sites listed above will reveal that there is a wealth of information available Gypsy jazz guitar, Django Reinhardt, or Selmer guitars out on the Internet. Enjoy!!



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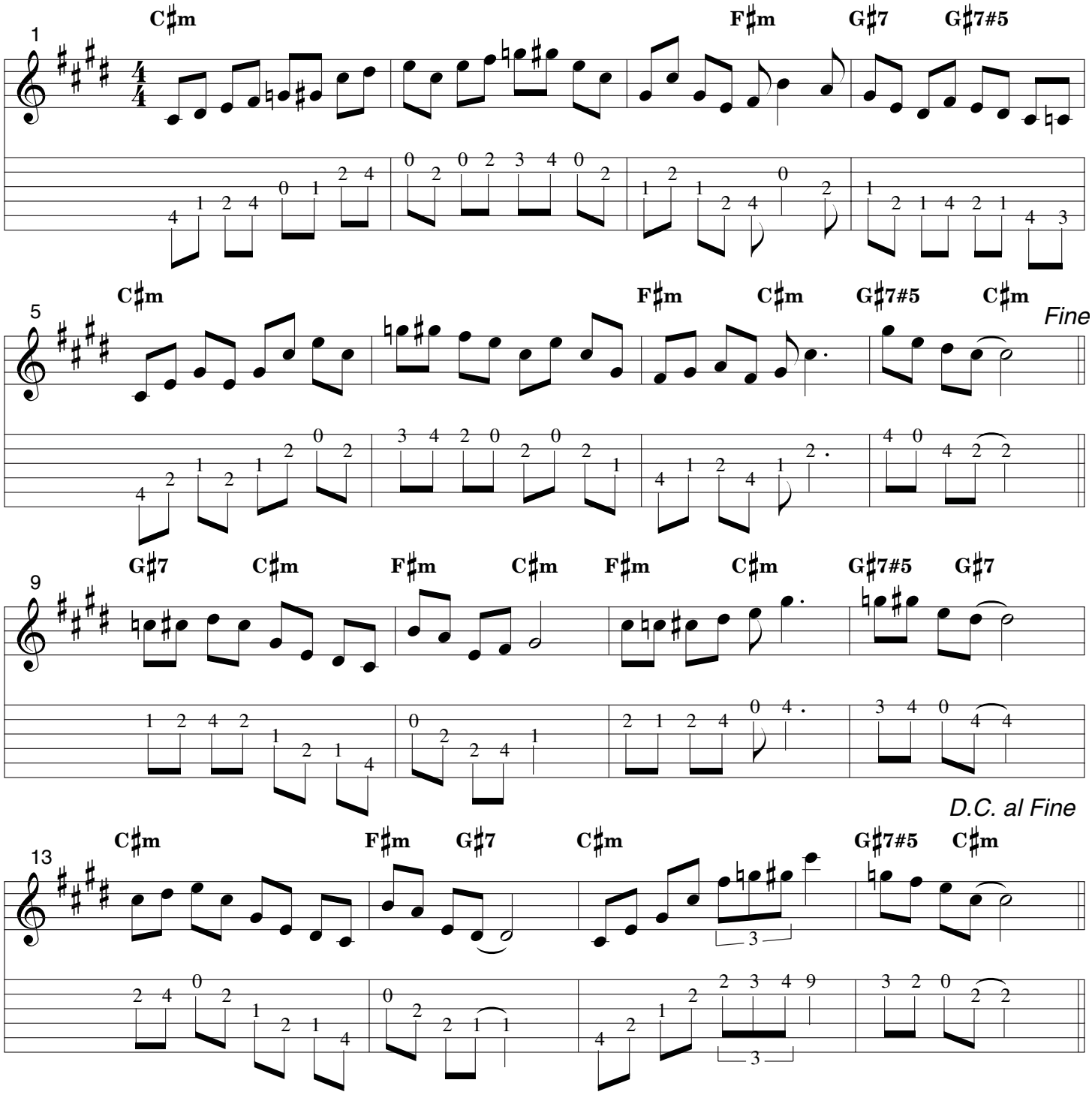
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PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES

by Adam Granger

FOLDED SCALES

Bonjour, flatpiquers en tout la monde! Seeing as how we're talking about gypsy/Django-style guitar playing in this issue, I thought a little discourse on improvisation, followed by some fodder with which to improvise, would be in order.

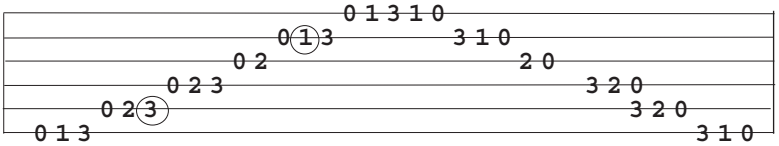
Why are flatpickers so taken with swing? The gypsy style, as exemplified by Django, is heavily laced with improvisation, as is the flatpick/bluegrass style. Where the latter use fiddle tunes and "AABB" songs, swing players use old standards, mostly AABA structure. Both styles are major-scale-based, and both tend to be eighth-note-oriented, requiring an alternating plectral technique on the guitar. It is, then a logical evolution—one that I've shepherded hundreds of guitar students through—from pickin' fiddle tunes to pickin' *Honeysuckle Rose*.

Regardless of the idiom in which we're working, improvisation is, essentially, spontaneous playing. As improvisers, our goal is to play fresh musical lines completely off the top of our heads, driven by emotion and what our auditory sense is telling us. For content, we draw from, among other things, discrete licks, pieces of scale, pieces of folded scale, arpeggios, pieces of other melodies (called "quoting" in the jazz biz), bits of chromatic scale, octaves, and pieces of (and variants on) the melody being improvised against. When we head into a solo, we attempt to clear our heads and—drawing as unconsciously as possible from our muscle-memory bank of the above-mentioned stuff—just let the music flow.

This attempt at a cerebral *tabula rasa*—to generate what are essentially out-of-body experiences every time a musician picks up his instrument—has historically included, all too often, consumption of copious amounts of alcohol and drugs. It has, tragically driven great musicians as diverse as Charlie Parker and Jimi Hendrix to early graves. We latter-day improvisers, having witnessed these losses, have gotten the message and are focusing on less harmful routes to the same unconscious realm: Zen, yoga, TM, and, my favorite, just sort of staring into the middle distance and drooling.

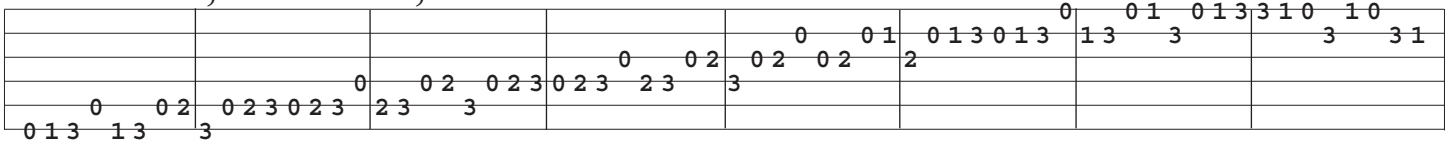
When we first start to improvise, the result is very obvious and shallow. We don't have much to work with: we've maybe learned a scale or two, and a few licks, and we sort of play those over and over. We then get irritated and bored with the limitations of our sound, and we add more stuff. It's the normal path to good improvisational skills (and it's what keeps teachers like me in business). One of the main areas of education, of course, is scales. Once scales are learned, they can be messed with to increase improvisatory material.

In this column, I'll introduce you to the folded scale. Anyone who has played *Arkansas Traveler* or *Blackberry Blossom* has played folded scales. I offer here a comprehensive look at these wondrous critters. Folded scales involve playing two, three or four notes of a scale, then cutting back to the next higher (or lower, if you're descending) note and working your way through the scale. Didn't get that definition? Neither did I; let's just play a few. We're going to use the first position C scale as our guinea pig, so, if you don't know this scale, spend a few minutes drilling on it. The version I present here includes not just the roots (which I've circled), but all of the first position notes in the key of C:



All right, let's try a folded scale. This is a four-note folded scale, with the beat on the first note:

FOLDED, 4-NOTE, BEAT ON FIRST NOTE



Got it? Good! Okay, now, one thing people do when they learn folded scales is to unconsciously put the beat in the same place every time they play it. To avoid that rather monotonous situation, I present three versions of the same scale you just played, but with the beats on the other three notes. Be patient: this beat-on-note business can be hard for the ear to hear initially, but hang in there and play these correctly and you'll get it. I promise.

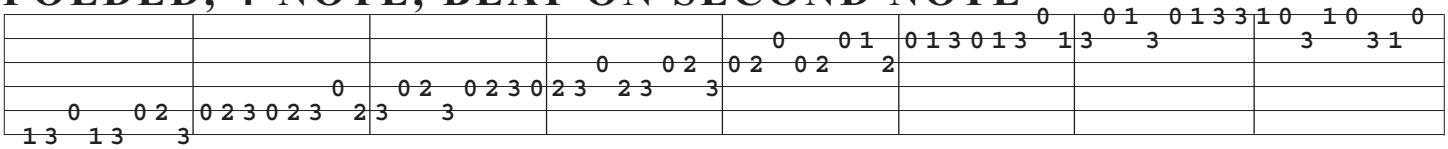
READING *EASYTAB*

Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

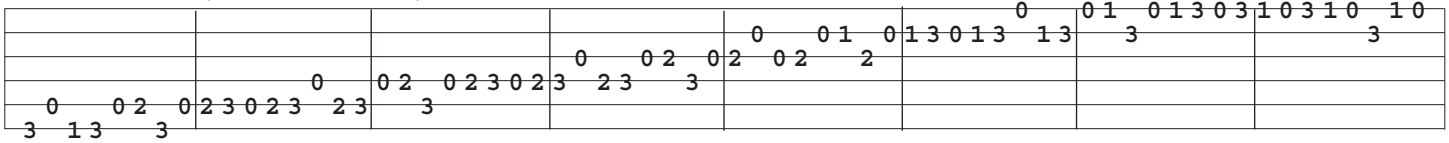
FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in synch", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-down-up.

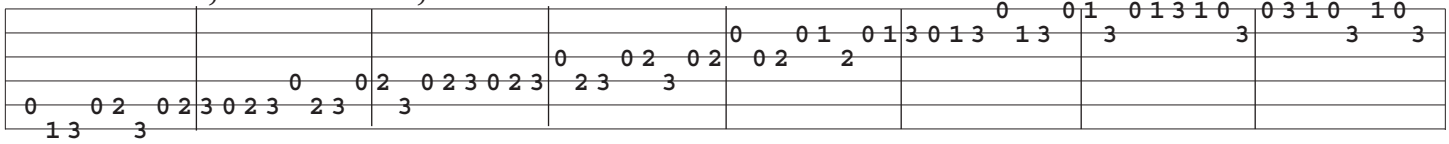
FOLDED, 4-NOTE, BEAT ON SECOND NOTE



FOLDED, 4-NOTE, BEAT ON THIRD NOTE

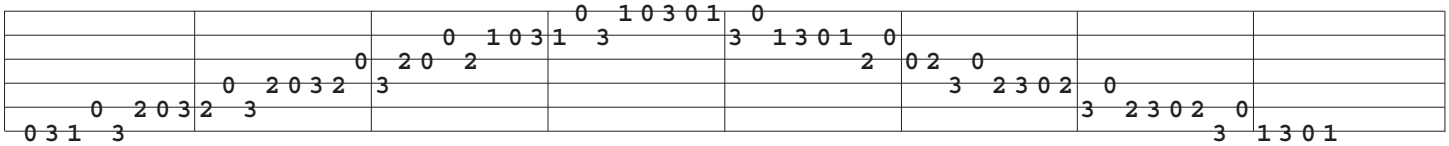


FOLDED, 4-NOTE, BEAT ON FOURTH NOTE

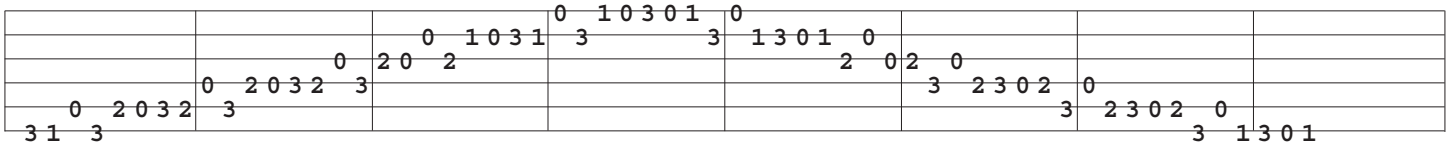


The rule of thumb (or finger) is to start on the note you want the beat on. The actual sequence of notes remains the same. If you're not getting this, the *FGM* Companion CD is highly recommended. On it, I play these scales against a metronome and you can really hear the differences among the versions. All right, let's look at the two-note folded scale next. This is the jazziest of the folded scales, and is the least recognizeable as a pattern. I offer both beat options below:

FOLDED, 2-NOTE, BEAT ON FIRST NOTE

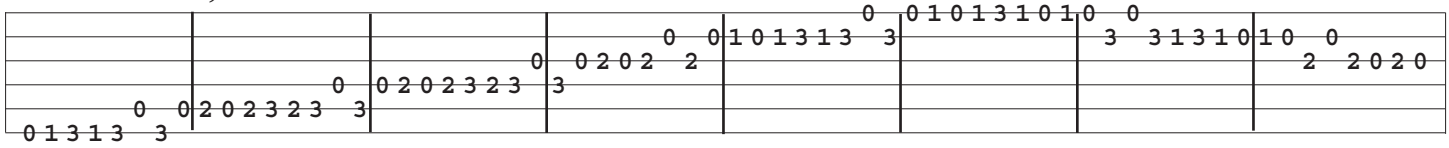


FOLDED, 2-NOTE, BEAT ON SECOND NOTE



And finally, the three-note version. This sounds like triplets, and can be played as such, but I've written it syncopated against a 2/4 time signature. I demonstrate both on the CD. The syncopated version has no consistent beat note (that's what makes it syncopated, right?), so you've only got to learn one version.

FOLDED, 3-NOTE



Okay, there you hve a primer on folded scales. You can give this treatment to every scale you know. I, for example, have learned to play all of the CAGED scales in two, three and four note folded scales with the beat on any note I want. Little pieces of these scales are laced throughout my improvisation. Mind you, this process takes years, but what else do you have to do? And, as with all of these improvisatory devices, you can start using any part of these scales that you've learned right away, and add more as time and energy permit.

One last word about improvisation: The shorter and more fluidly intermingled the elements of improvisation are, the closer we come to truly improvising. It is, however, a goal which is never entirely met, even by the greats. I've studied Django Reinhardt for thirty years, and can, in large part, delineate his solos into a (large!) collection of "Django licks". The same has been done with Charlie Parker and Louis Armstrong and Clarence White. The more artfully musicians employ these devices, and the larger their databases become, the closer they come to truly improvising.

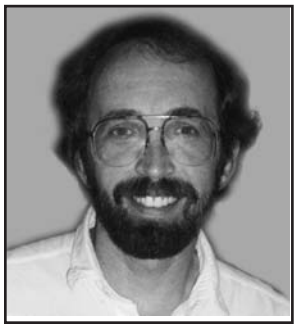
Et maintenant, au revoir, mes amis de la flatpique. A tout a l'heur!

Not that you'd know it, but Adam studied French for six years in school in Oklahoma. His French-Canadian wife loves it when he speaks French with an Oklahoma accent.

Exploring Bluegrass Guitar

Clarence White Classics

by Steve Pottier



Clarence White and Django

I've discussed Clarence White's use of Django licks in a previous column (September/October 1997). With this issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* focusing on Django, it is time to revisit the connection.

It's pretty obvious to me that Clarence spent a fair amount of time listening to Django, just by listening to the licks he plays in "Beaumont Rag," "Alabama Jubilee" and "A Good Woman's Love." And of course, there are the stories of Clarence taking boxes of Django tapes with him everywhere. But here's a twist: I was listening to a Django recording of "Farewell Blues," and right in the middle of it a horn player played a Clarence White lick! Okay, Clarence ripped the lick from the horn player, but it made me realize that he was listening for any neat thing he could apply to his playing. Why not take something from a horn player and put it in a bluegrass version of a jazz tune?

"Farewell Blues," as far as I know, was brought into the bluegrass repertoire by Earl Scruggs. Most of the time I hear it played as two parts, with the second part just hanging out in a C7 chord (or C9 as Clarence sometimes did) until the A chord. Here is a composite version from Clarence's playing compiled to show off some Django licks and the previously mentioned horn part. A good source for Clarence's playing on this tune is the sound track for *Deliverance*.

The tune starts out with an expanded idea of the "Beaumont Rag" lick. Use the first finger for the initial slide. Just before measure 3 it settles into the variation of the "Beaumont Rag" lick. Now you listen for the line on the second string as it goes chromatically up and down, building tension until you get to the high C on the first string and into the A part. This is a real bubbly sounding lick, and you want to try and make the notes on the third string sound out clear, as well as the chromatic run on the second string.

The A lick is also a very bubbly sounding lick, and it works best when the tune is played at a more moderate tempo.

The D- D# section is typical Clarence White syncopation and fairly straight forward. The D chord is a three string chord with the third finger on the fourth string, first finger on the third string and third finger on the second string, what I call an "inside" D.

The last part is the horn riff Clarence lifted. I'm not entirely sure of the fingering, but he usually went with what was the most economical, and so I chose this one. When you get to measure 16, be sure to leave your first finger on the C note for economy and stability.

The music of Django Reinhardt is harmonically and rhythmically very close to bluegrass, and therefore it's a good direction to look for inspiration of musical ideas. Django has been an inspiration to Clarence and everyone from B.B. King and Eric Clapton to Chet Atkins and Doc Watson. Maybe there's something there for you!

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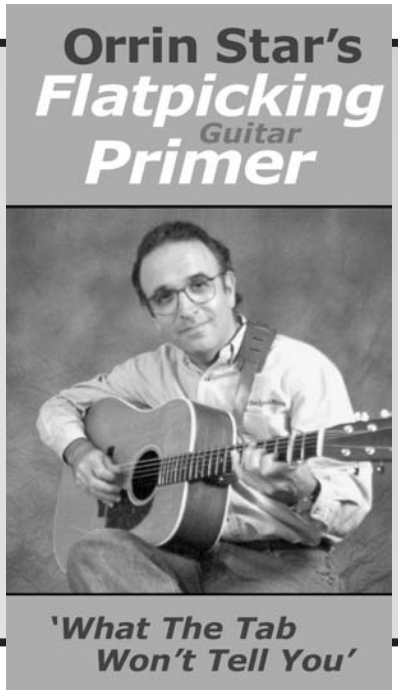
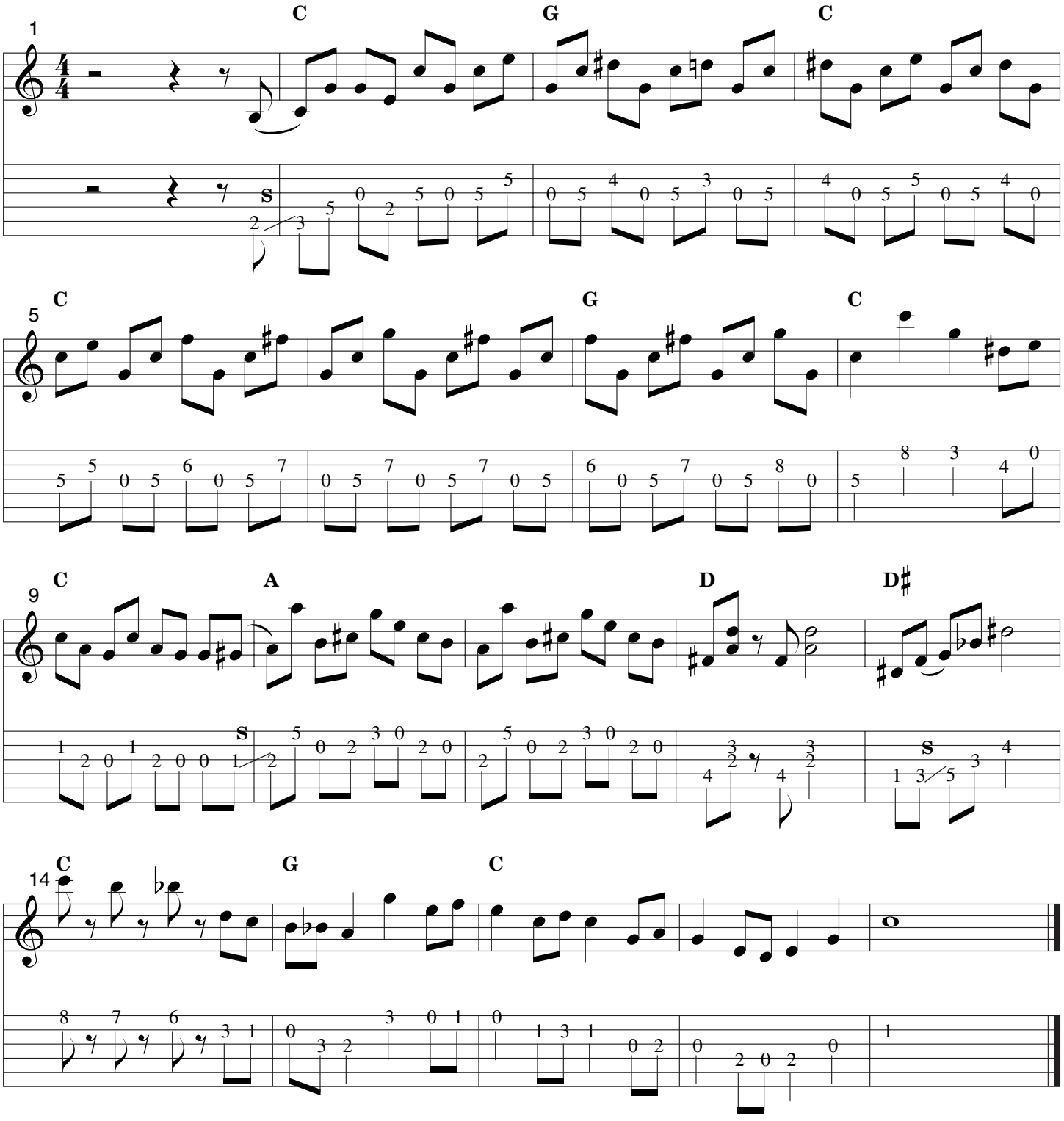


Farewell Blues

Arranged by Clarence White
Transcribed by Steve Pottier

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John McGann (www.johnmcgann.com) is a Boston based performer, recording artist and transcriber for hire. Recent recordings include Wayfaring Strangers Shifting Sands of Time on Rounder.

Django's "Manior des mes Reves" ("Django's Castle")

Here is a solo I played on the Django composition "Manior Des Mes Reves", (also known as "Django's Castle"), on a CD by my good friend Yoshihiro Arita titled *Whale Dance* (Strictly Country SCR-28). Hiro plays the melody and second improvisational chorus, while I take the first improv. While not as great as a real Django solo, this improvisation may give you a few insights and ideas you can use. I would point out how the rhythmic phrasing is much more varied than in a bluegrass/fiddle tune context. There is a variety of note duration, and the rests are as important as the notes! This ballad tempo allows for some double-time passages without going into the "frantic zone."

Django was not only one of the greatest improvisers of all time, but a wonderful composer as well. We are truly lucky that he left behind so many hours of recordings for us to enjoy.

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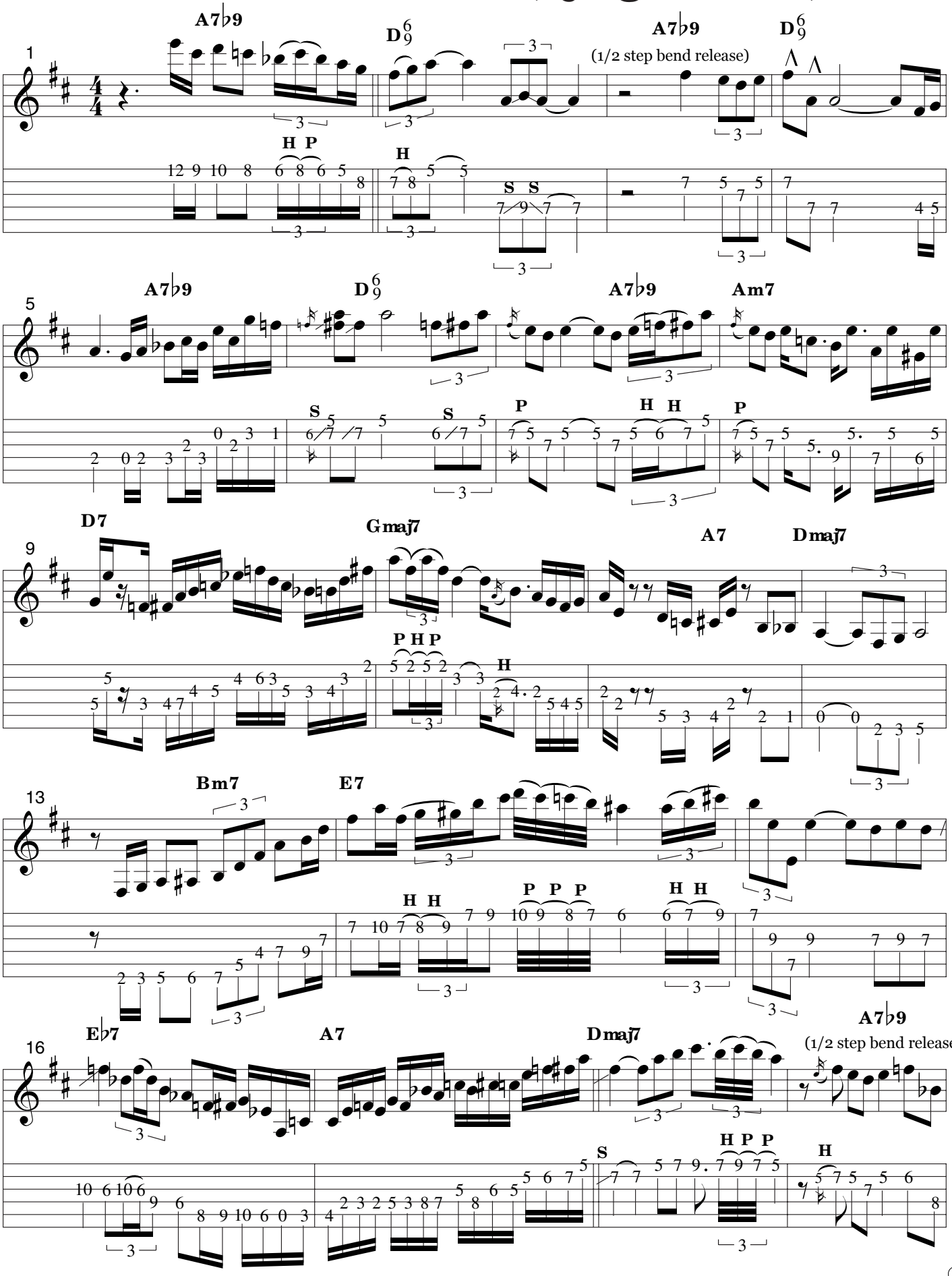
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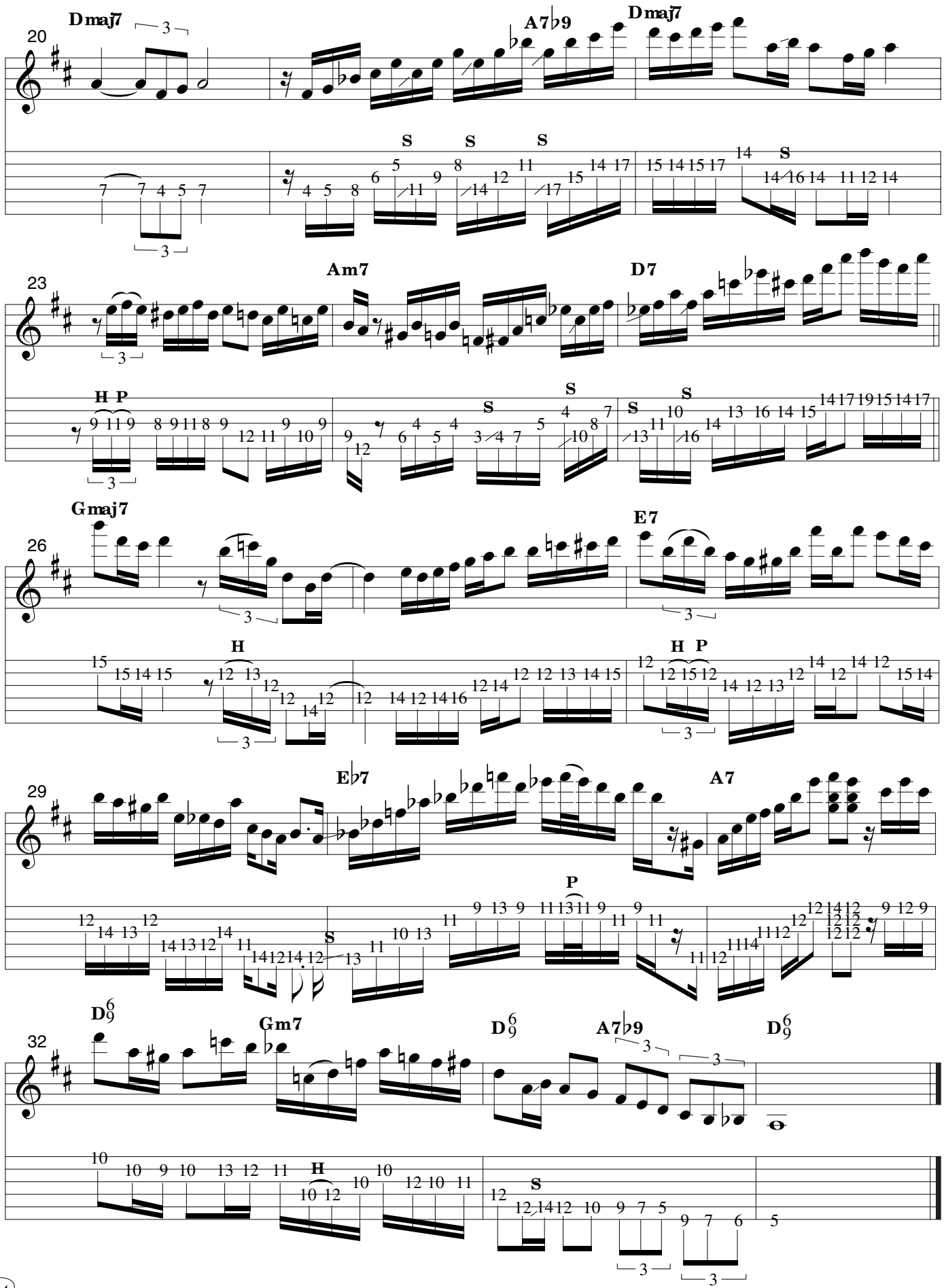


New Release Highlight
Pearl Django: *Avalon*

by Rob Bulkley

When I first set out to listen to Northwest-based Pearl Django I approached them with same apprehension that I would a bluegrass band that "plays it just like Lester and Earl": the radar was out for any signs of slavish emulation, poor execution, and stiffness in the name of authenticity. The legacy of Django Reinhardt, Stephane Grapelli, and the Quintet of the Hot Club of France would appear to be nearly unassailable, and attempting to carry on and even build on that tradition would seem an audacious and daunting task. The delightful surprise, on hearing Pearl Django's recent CD *Avalon*, is that they accomplish what they set out to do, and not only that, but they make it appear easy. No tempo ever seems forced, the solos sparkle with fat tone, technical prowess, and lyrical grace, and they mix Hot Club repertoire with fine American standards and strong originals. When they quote from classic arrangements or solos, the effect is still fresh and exciting and serves to link their original ideas more firmly to the jazz tradition.

Neil Andersson and Shelley Park draw wonderful rich sounds from Selmer-style guitars (built by Shelley Park in her Vancouver, B.C., workshop), while Dudley Hill prefers an equally fine sounding archtop. The three-guitar assault never clashes or bogs down, and the rhythm is amazingly supple and fluid sounding. It is good music no matter what the label or expectations one brings to it. *Avalon* has garnered rave reviews, spent time on the Gavin Jazz Chart's Top 40, and the band has been featured on *All Things Considered* on National Public Radio. I interviewed the guitar players recently as they prepared to go back into the studio, and was impressed that they spoke as they play—with a shared love of the music and a common vision of the sound. Recently, Shelley Park has left the band in order to devote more time to her guitarmaking career.

As I listened to the album its assuredness and the fluidity of the playing struck me. And I had the odd thought that here is a band of North American musicians offering up interpretations of French musicians who were interpreting American Jazz.

(Neil) [laughs] That's exactly what it is—they were copying American music and now we're Americans copying the French translation of American music. It's a really interesting exchange. This is really funny-I heard a CD by a prominent French player who I really feel copied a couple of our versions of Django, so you have Americans copying French and then French copying the Americans who are copying the French.

How did you get started in music?

(Shelley) My parents bought me my first guitar for my high school graduation, and my first year of university was kind of ruined by wanting to play guitar more than wanting to study. I decided to take some time off and I sort of woke up one day wondering if there were courses on building guitars. I went down to the local library, dug out college calendars and found that there was a course on guitarmaking offered in New Westminster.

The fella teaching the course was Michael Dunn, well known for building Django-style guitars and playing Gypsy jazz. It was through him that I was introduced to the music. I had never heard anything like it and at that time he was learning the Hawaiian guitar so he needed someone who could play three chords. In exchange for me being his Hawaiian guitar player he introduced me to the rhythm guitar style of Gypsy jazz. I certainly owe a tremendous amount to Michael—he was the person who opened the door both musically and in terms of guitarmaking. He's quite a character

(Neil) I started playing guitar around 1961. I was listening to blues—there was a group out of the Northwest called the Wailers with Rich Dangel playing guitar. My main person that I listened to was Freddie King. There was an album called *Hideaway and Dance Away with Freddie King*, and that was sort of my Bible. I listened to that incessantly and tried to copy everything on it. He was simple enough that I could hear quite a bit of what he was playing. He was playing a thin hollowbody Guild, and got a tremendous biting sound out of it. I listened to Howard Roberts, and picked up a few of the jazz masters, and was listening to pop music like everybody else at that time. I think I first heard Django's early recordings around the mid-seventies and I thought it was just fantastic but I had no idea what the music was or how to play it and I was playing pop music, so I kind of enjoyed it but didn't try to actually learn anything, or copy any of his lines or anything.

(Dudley) I was really into my sister's Kingston Trio records, and my mother suggested that I take up the banjo. I met a fellow who was in college, and he showed me some things, and one day he took out his 50s D-28, and started playing "Jimmie Brown, the Newsboy," and I'll tell you what—to this day I use that as the center of where I think. The sound was just absolutely gorgeous, he had very fluid nice warm flatpicking style and it wasn't fancy, he wasn't playing get up and go fiddle tunes, he was just playing "Wildwood Flower," "Jimmie Brown, the Newsboy," and those kind of tunes. I learned to play right off the bat a good way. When the Beatles came out I got interested in playing electric guitar but when I got out of the Navy in 1969 I got another acoustic guitar and I decided, well, I'm really going to woodshed on this. [Author's note: Dudley played exten-

sively with the great Benny Thomasson in the early 1970's and recorded a pioneer flatpicking LP *From A Northern Family*, released in 1975.]

I first heard Django Reinhardt in the late 60s, and I didn't know what to make of it—it was so different that I put the record down and I didn't pick it up until the mid 70s. I bought a Django record, this time it was the Hot Club of France, one of those old 30s recordings—and I dug it right away, cause it was swinging and I always liked swing, you know, but it never occurred to me to play the music.

What propelled you into playing Gypsy jazz?

(Neil) I guess I really got interested in it when I started getting together with Dudley Hill. Around 1990 we were asked to play at a restaurant, so we started just learning some standards.

(Dudley) When I got down there he shanghaied me a little by saying "You know some standards, don't you?" and pulled out a fake book. That scared the hell out of me! I had the unique position of having the gig first before I could play the tunes! As we went along and got better, we started to talk about some of the things we liked, and Neil said, "Have you ever heard Django Reinhardt?" and I said "Yeah, yeah, this is great!" It started from there, and next thing you know we added a bass player, and we thought, boy, wouldn't it be great to get a violin player, and then, oh, boy, how about another guitar, and it just kept moving that way.

I'm interested in the challenges you faced learning the music—specifically the guitar style.

(Neil) Well, there are a whole bunch of things that are hard at the same time. Playing a lot of arpeggiated runs, playing runs over the more complex chords, and technically copying some of Django's stuff is very difficult, so it takes a while to try to hear the notes and work on the fingering. If you listen to anybody a lot you get to hear things that they repeat, there are some things that are distinctly Django, that you can learn and kind of incorporate in your own playing.

(Dudley) For me it was, "I've got to go to the head of the river here—where's the source of this river?" These guys are either passed away now or very close to it. The greatest challenge was OK, I've got to learn a completely new system of playing, and I decided if I was going to get into this I had to go to the source, like I went to the source with Benny Thomasson. I found an old retired guitar player named Steve Jordan, who had played with Benny Goodman. Talking to him on the phone I learned a lot of things; he was still as hip as ever, in his late seventies. I did go back East and spend a day with him—spending the day with him was just a terrific vibe. So it was really fortunate that I was able to get this guy—and Pearl Django has been lucky enough over the years to play steady and there's nothing like playing gigs to really pull it together, you know.

One of the things that really defines the Hot Club sound is those two rhythm guitars always chugging along. It's a big sound for the soloists to work against, and I was intrigued by the fact that you have taken the two-guitar rhythm format and made it sound very fluid and flexible. How did this come about, and how do you deal with keeping the guitar sound from turning muddy or indistinct?

(Neil) When you're working with two guitar players you have to make sure that everybody's keeping time the same way. When Shelly was playing rhythm, either Dudley or I would kind of synch in with her and the other player would play more accents and have a little bit more freedom in the harmonic area. In Europe there's a really specific kind of style of playing rhythm for this music. The French even have a word for it—it's *pompe*—that's the style for the rhythm guitarist, and Shelly actually plays that pretty well.

(Shelley) I have a rigid way that I play and I refuse to change it; we all play rhythm guitar very differently from each other, and somehow miraculously it seems to work, but I think that fluidity you heard is the little differences we each have in syncopation. They iron out the boxy feel that I do with their different approaches.

(Dudley) I'd eyeball to see where Shelley was playing and I'd voice the chord differently so that one G chord didn't sound like a big, mushy G chord. The beautiful thing about playing a three-note system is that with three guitars you don't have 18 strings playing; you have a more percussive sound and you're able to blend in better. That helped us keep the sound clean. When the violin starts to take a solo, I'll back off and make it sound percussive. You learn to work together. It takes time.

(Neil) The guys that played rhythm for Django did come up with a different way of playing rhythm. I read somewhere that both Django and Stephan were not really fond of it, that they in fact didn't like it and wanted something more American, but this is kind of what they had so they went with it. What happens when it's just Dudley and me playing is that each time we change over there's a difference in the way the rhythm is played. If you have somebody playing rhythm constantly it kind of connects together in a more seamless way and the person who's going into playing rhythm will synch up with the person who's already playing rhythm.

(Shelley) I do end up being a significant contributor to the tempo and feel of the song. Sometimes that's good and other times... [laughs] You know, subtlety isn't one of my strong points when I'm playing, so there are times when I'm sort of ham-fisted about it.

How closely do you adhere to the techniques and overall Django guitar solo style?

(Dudley) We didn't really want to recreate the 1934 Hot Cub of France. We wanted to take it and move on with our own thing. I got heavily into the big band style of playing guitar, which is a three-note chord way of playing—with just two notes, three notes, sometimes four, but mostly a three-note chord style; those chord voicings are not unlike the big band chord voicings. What you're playing is the same chords we've always known, we're just voicing them differently. I'm doing it in a three-note chord system, not hard to learn at all.

(Neil) There are very, very few things that I quote, and a couple of solos or phrases that I'll do supposedly note for note, never exactly the same. Certain things just creep into my playing that I think happen just by listening to the music and just having it sort of digested internally. It is kind of like listening to a language and trying to internalize it and I think that's a good way to do it. I think learning lick-by-lick and then copying and trying to play like somebody else is interesting but I don't think it's as successful as kind of listening to the music and just letting whatever it is about that music soak into you.

(Dudley) When we play, you can't say, well, I want to be a Gypsy; you're not a Gypsy, so what are you going to do? You play it the way it comes out of you as a musician. One of the things I enjoy about the group is that we're not playing that

European style; what comes out is what you hear on the records. It's a great sound-it's a combination of the Django style, the American jazz standard style, and the 40s small combo swing stuff. Someone says, "what kind of music do you play?" and I usually say small combo swing with a Gypsy jazz influence.

Tell me about the guitars you use and how you play them.

(Dudley) For ten years I've been using a Gibson L-5, non-cutaway, made in 1947. It's a beautiful guitar for the chords and also the chord melody style that I like to play. On *Avalon* I play an old 1940 Epiphone Emperor, which is just a gorgeous big band guitar, and I picked that up about two years ago. I do have a guitar that was made by Shelley Park. It doesn't have a pickup so I don't play it live, but I've used it on the recordings.

I was really impressed by the tone of Shelley's Selmer-style guitars, which both Neil and Shelley play.

(Neil) There are two styles. One is the oval hole and the other is called the D-hole, and in French it's literally translated as little mouth and big mouth—*petite bouche* and *grande bouche*. Generally I play the small oval hole, which is the one that's usually associated with Django's playing. I don't have a great preference—the oval hole is a little tighter sounding and has greater high end so for a soloist it cuts through a bit more. And usually the D-hole is seen as a rhythm instrument. It has a deeper low end.

(Shelley) They do require a really different touch. I would say that the Selmer Maccaferri guitars—the thing that really makes them different from American flat-top guitars is using a floating bridge and tailpiece on a top that isn't a carved top.

Do you dome the tops?

(Shelley) Yeah, the braces have about a twelve-foot radius, which is quite pronounced. It's basically the same radius as the back of the guitar. The originals had domed tops, and that's part of strengthening the top to counteract the down pressure of the bridge.

Do you ever use the internal resonator?

(Shelley) I have built one. Neil owns that guitar and that was mostly an exercise in proving that I could do it. I sort of go back and forth on them. I don't really think they are necessary, but I think they're definitely very interesting. However, they are repairman's nightmares. If a brace ever got loose in there, or even installing a pickup becomes a total nightmare. Sometimes people ask about doing them and I tell them that I'm not entirely sure that the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, but as I say, I don't have a tremendous amount of experience with them. I've only built the one. It was a fun exercise, put it that way.

How do you get the best tone from them?

(Shelley) For many people, when they first pick them up, they're so strange they can be a little bit unappealing. It does require that you change your technique a little bit. They sound best when you play a really hard right-hand attack near the bridge. If you play up over the soundhole or the fingerboard they tend to get ratty-sounding. They use a very light gauge string—either .10-.45 or .11-.46. The oval hole has a much longer scale length than is typically used on an acoustic guitar, so when you stretch that skinny string over a long scale length you get a really interesting tension on the strings but without having to have a beefy huge round string. The D-hole uses a short scale length and a 12-fret neck so they have a wonderful, almost classical roundness to them. They are thundering great rhythm guitars. You drive people out of the room with them, they are just ridiculously loud. I just love the look of the guitars and I love the sound of them, and from a practical point of view it's a niche in the market for me. But that aside I truly think that they are a wonderful design.

What do you think about the stylistic "direction" of the band and the interest in Gypsy jazz?

(Neil) I think it's becoming more popular. It appeals to people who like acoustic music, it appeals to people who like strong melodies, it appeals to people who like, sort of, "toe-tappin'" music, which I know sounds kind of bad, but in a good way, something that really, hopefully has some energy. When we think about material, we try to incorporate different kinds of songs: standards, Django compositions, original compositions, and a mix of tempos. I think the thing that binds it together is the general concept of what Stephane and Django were doing in 30s and 40s: a music that has strong melodies and improvising and a chugging rhythm. Overriding all that is the sense that we need to keep focused on who we are as players, which is basically American players coming from a Rock'n'roll background, or some other, It's also a really fun kind of music to play, and I think that makes a big difference.

(Shelley) I get to watch it from a couple of different standpoints, as a person selling guitars and as someone who performs this style of music. As far as where it's going, right now I would say the European scene is dominated by a lot of guys who are pushing the boundaries of speed and taste! [laughs] I don't mean to disparage them but that's kind of where I hear the European scene going right now. In North America there are bands popping up all over the place. To my ear there's a more musical approach rather than just trying to be the fastest. Certainly none of us can claim to be gypsies and so it'll all have a North American feel to it.

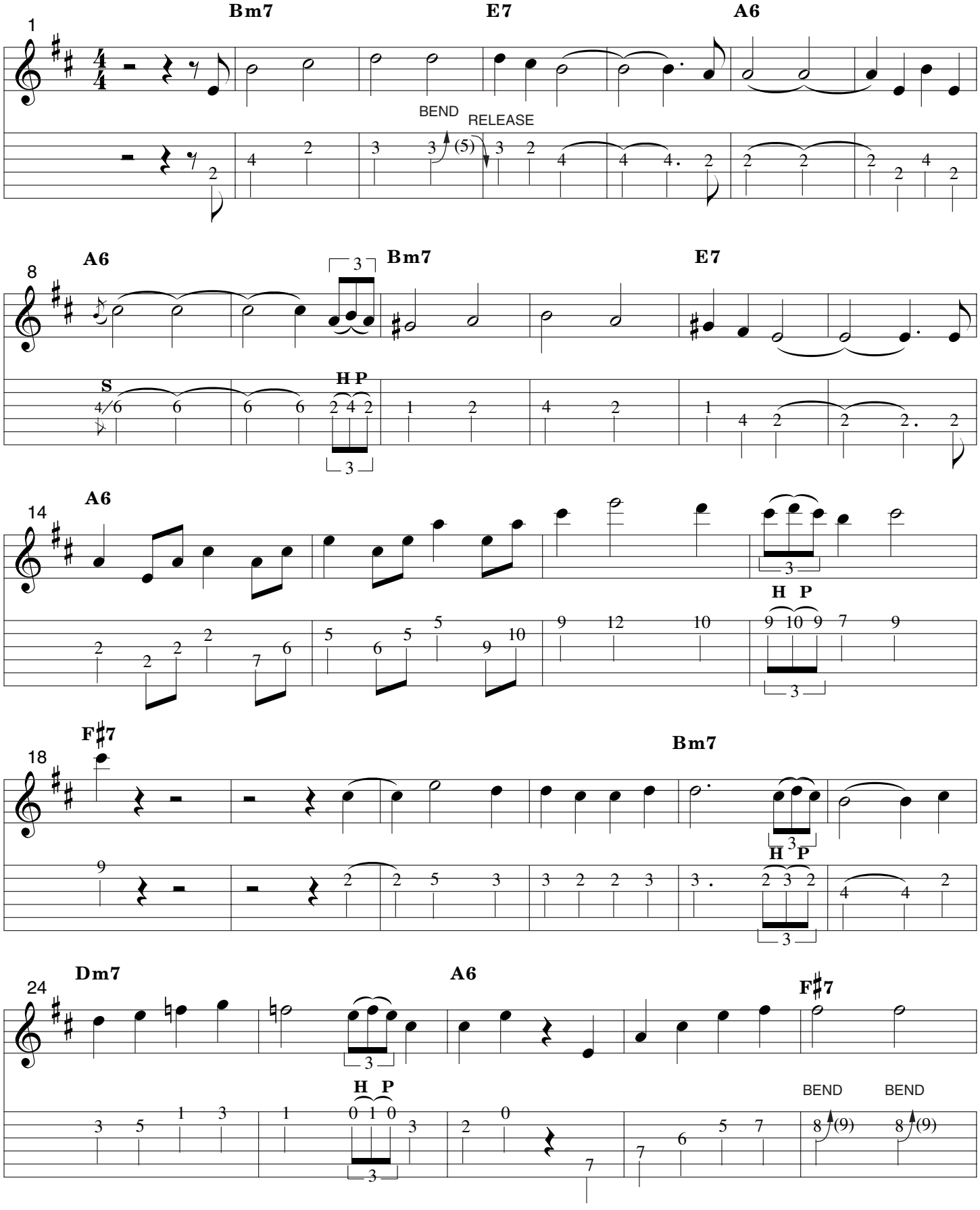
(Neil) From a guitar player's vantage point I really like practicing this kind of music. It's like trying to unravel a puzzle and at the same time develop on your own. It has some good things to keep you challenged.

(Dudley) That's why I still enjoy it after ten years. It just keeps going and you go with it. It's so interesting because as you go on the people in the band get better at what they're doing, and the ideas start to flow, and that's what keeps you going: it's so much fun. If it stops being fun, then I lose interest, but it's always been fun. The ideas for records get better and better, and it still gives you that "I wanna grab the guitar and I wanna play this," like it did ten years ago.

The Django thing is the center of where we're at, but we're not Europeans, we're not Gypsies. I'm just a normal old middle class kid growing up in Tacoma and what I enjoy so much about this band is that the influences we had when we first began playing as kids stay with ya. Neil and I are huge Freddie King fans—just a great guitar player—I'm a huge Beatle fan, some of the old-timers will say "Whaddya like that stuff for?" Well, those old-timers weren't 17 years old in 1964. I *was* 17 in 1964 and by golly that's the stuff I was digging and I still do. So do you drop that when you want to play a certain style of music? The thing is, you can't drop it. It's been with you and it stays with you and I'll argue that till the last day.

Avalon

Transcribed by Rob Bulkley

Neil's solo

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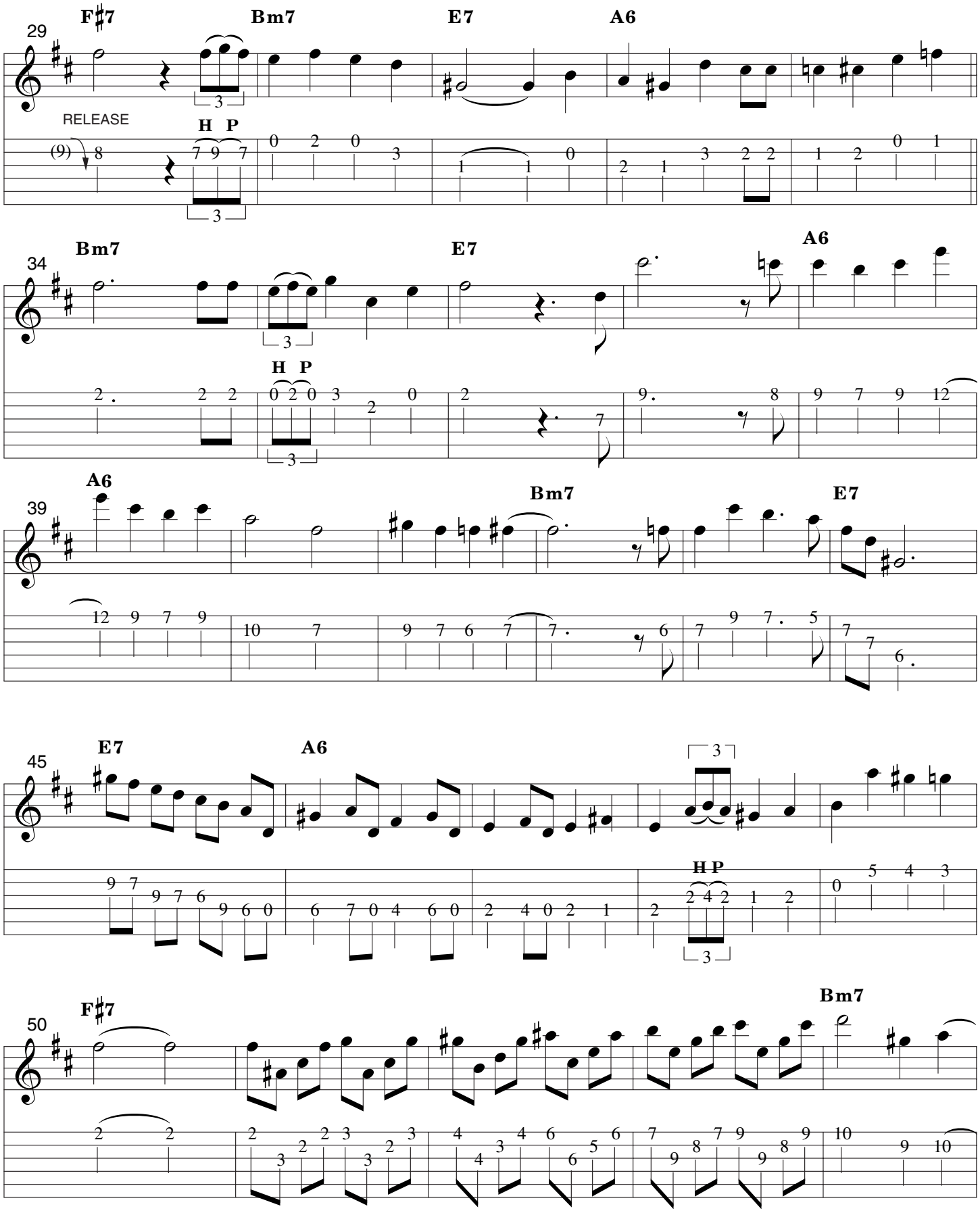
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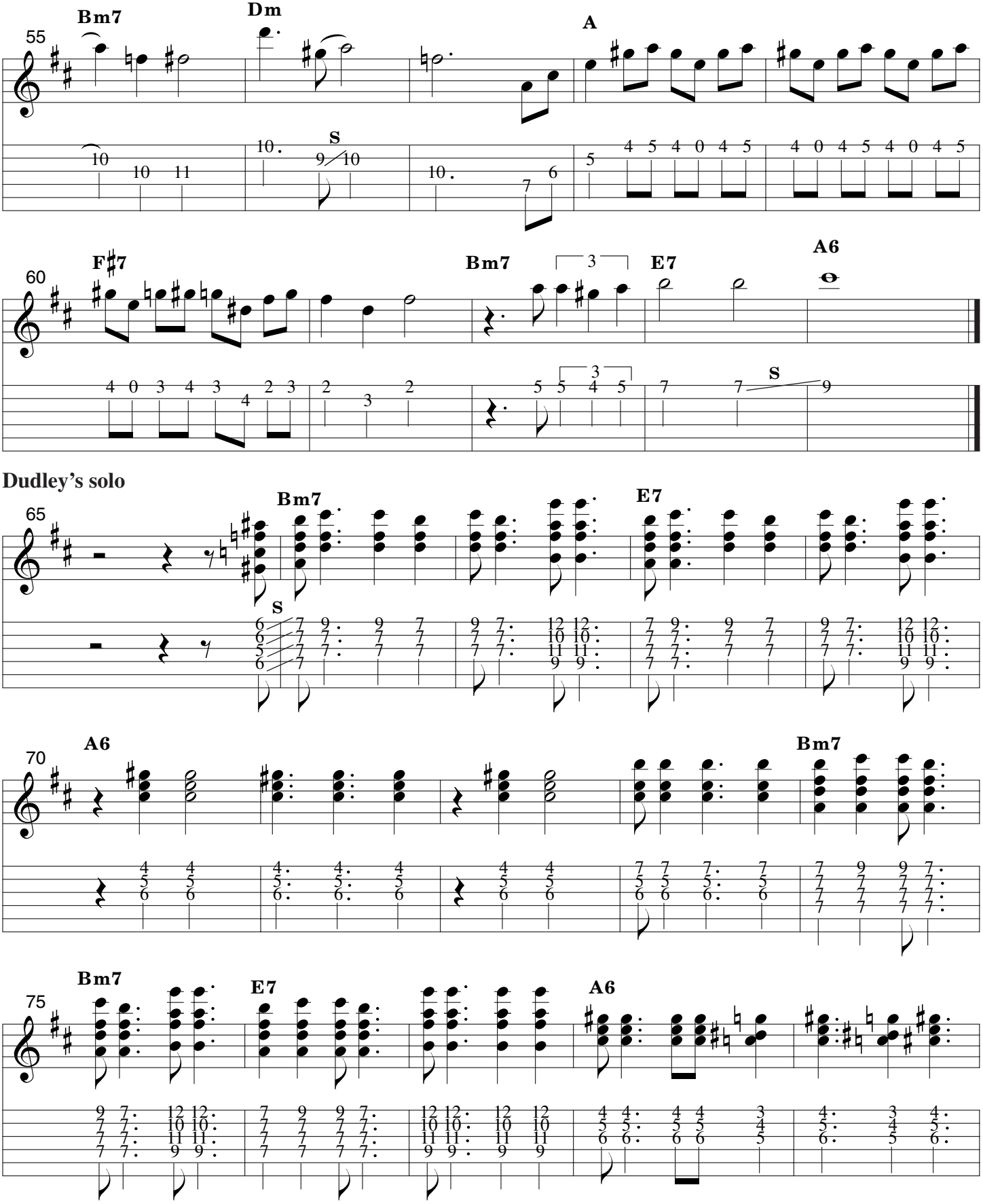
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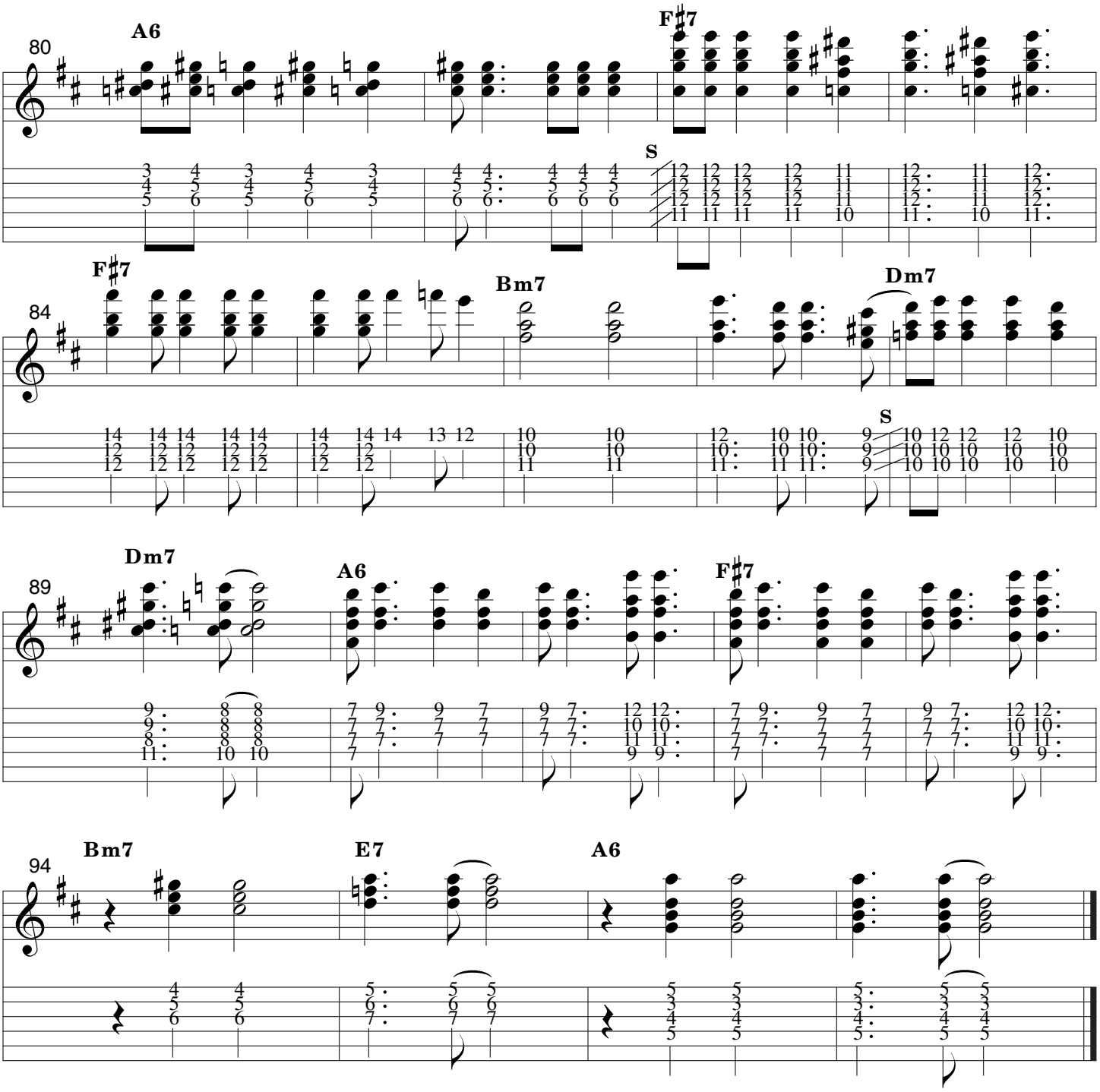
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Reviews

CD Reviews: Gypsy Jazz on Disc by Ted Gottsegen

Contemporary Sinti jazz is something of a paradox. The foundations of the contemporary style are based on the same swing era elements laid out by Django, namely an acoustic brand of jazz played on specific types of stringed instruments. Although through the four successive generations who have played the style since Reinhardt's passing, the music has evolved within these seemingly narrow confines. Unlike other musical forms of old like Dixieland, which is defined by an almost slavish adherence to original sound, Sinti jazz has accepted these influences yet adapted them to fit their own unique purposes. The music has developed in large part regionally and as such; it's quite easy to tell where a Sinti jazzman is from within the first few measures of the tune being played.

Here is a list of musicians categorized by their country of origin. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but simply a primer for citing albums by each artist that highlight their unique style and are obtainable with relative ease. Bear in mind that since Jazz Manouche is a European art form and since the distribution for independent music is mediocre at best, many of these listed must be ordered from Europe. Fear not! When the exchange rate and shipping are factored in, the prices are quite comparable to a trip to the local Border's or Tower Records. When possible, sources within the US are listed.

France

France, and especially Paris, has always been the spiritual home of Jazz Manouche. The smooth, sophisticated music of the Hot Club du France can be felt in the very energy of the City. It is also the place, that most typifies the steady, onward progression through the acceptance of outside influences as opposed to it's being locked in a holding pattern of dreamy nostalgia and Django necrophilia. Today, the contemporary repertoire in Paris is an amalgamation of the Hot Club sound combined with the Musette swings and waltzes of the 30s and 40s, modern jazz of the 50s and 60s, French Chanson tradition (French popular song typified by Edith Piaf and Yves Montand among others) and the Gypsy waltzes perpetuated by the Ferret brothers and Gusti Malha.

Matelo, Baro and Sarane Ferret
Jazz Gitan 1939 – 1943
Jazz Archives 144
http://www.towerrecords.com

While these are by far the most important players in Jazz Manouche next to Django, their recorded output, which was quite large in their day, presently remains pitifully small. However, *Jazz Gitan* is a one-stop shop, featuring recordings by all three as leaders, each in their respective styles, which would become the mainstay of genres current repertoire. Baro's manouche waltzes, including the first recording of Reinhardt's waltz "Chez Jacquet" (labeled as "Gin-Gin") and a stunning rendition of "Valse des Niglos". Sarane's Quintette du Paris swings through a varied set of material, mostly originals and a few fine covers. It's interesting to hear another group playing Hot Club classics like "Hungaria" and "Daphne." Matelo's plays some offbeat highly progressive tunes with boppish influences, which predate that styles emergence in Europe by several years offering an early glimpse into the mind of a musical genius. This is a must have in any collection.

Patrick Saussois' Alma Sinti
***Alma Sinti* – DJ 528-2**
***Rhythm Gitan* – DJ 532-2**
http://www.buffalobrosguitars.com/boutigue.htm

Perhaps one of the more progressive practitioners in Paris, Saussois is a highly capable musician who can play in just about any style with equal success. He plays Hot Club Swing, Musette, modern jazz and Valse Manouche amazingly enough all with the same band, Alma Sinti. Made up of two (at times three) rhythm guitars, accordion, bass, drums and piano, Alma Sinti's large ensemble make their expansive repertoire all the more feasible. It's not uncommon to find Baro Ferret's "Swing Valse" alongside Miles Davis' hard bop standard "Tune Up", Reinhardt's "Django's Tiger" and Bruno's bossa classic "Estaté" all in one set. An equally talented composer, his originals stand side-by-side with the classic material and swings seamlessly from start to finish. Stylistically influenced by players as

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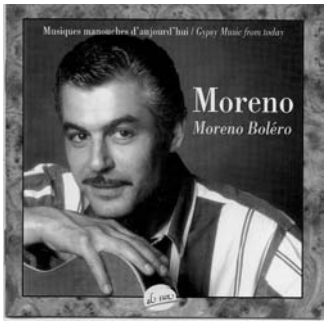
diverse as Jacques Montagne, Henri Crolla, Kenny Burrell and Wes Montgomery, this southpaw also plays with his guitar-strung righty that provides for a unique style, which is instantly recognizable. Alma Sinti also represent the Parisian traditional of using Stimer pick-ups through tube amps when it's time for amplification instead of using acoustic mics. For this writer's money, Patrick Saussois is at the forefront of contemporary Jazz Manouche.

Latcho Drom
***La Verdine* – LD 2**
Live 2001
http://www.fnac.com or
http://www.buffalobrosguitars.com/htm

Not to be confused with the movie by the same name, this group from Toulouse in south central France has that special something that sets them apart from the rest of the pack, namely an enveloping energetic vibe which consumes the listener. Led by Christophe Latrilleux, Latcho Drom's first two albums, *La Sorciere* and *La Verdine* radiate the aforementioned energy. Recently Latcho Drom has gone through numerous personal changes, with Latrilleux and bassist Joel Trolonge being the only original members remaining. While all of their albums are excellent, their second *La Verdine* captures the band with their original line-up at their best. Latcho Drom's most recent release *Live 2001* features the band in an extended format with most of the tunes stretching into the 5 minute and over mark which makes for some incredible extended improvisations from Latrilleux and violinist Florin Nicolescu. Romane's faithful rhythm man Doudou Cuillerier supports the soloists with verve and *pinnache*.

Moreno
***Moreno Bolero* – Al Sur**
***Moreno* – Hot Club Records**
http://www.fnac.com



Moreno is one of the more controversial guitarists on the scene today. His style is macho, through and through. Equipped with massive chops in the form of a muscular, aggressive tone, and by default a penchant for showing off he seems to bring out two qualities in fans – adulation as a musical marvel or dismissal as a wanton heretic. While he claims allegiance stylistically to Alsace, the border region between France and Germany, and his style shows nods to Tchavolo Schmitt his hard tone and aggressively attack show a clear influence of the German school of Lulu Reinhardt, Ziroli Winterstein and Geisela Reinhardt. Love him or hate him, his style is exciting and he remains one of the most popular players on the scene today. *Moreno Bolero* features the dynamic Samy Daussat on rhythm guitar who has swung behind the best in France including Raphael Fays, Babik Reinhardt and Patrick Saussois. *Moreno*, released by Jon Larsen's Hot Club Records in Norway has Moreno teamed with Angelo DeBarre, which makes for some compelling listening.

Angelo DeBarre
***Gypsy Guitars* – Hot Club Records**
***Caprice* – Hot Club Records**
http://www.nordi.no/hcr or
http://www.fnac.com

Angelo is a human dynamo. His style follows the legends of classic Jazz Manouche (Patotte Bousquetand "Tchan-Tchou" Videl, among others) and he plays in a highly expressive, high-energy style. His ultra fast tempos and exciting improvisations have made him one of the most in-demand players and popular attractions at festivals throughout Europe. He is also a fine exponent of the Tzigane traditional of Russian and Easter European melodies and Czardas. He took part in the second annual Django Reinhardt Festival at Birdland in NYC. *Gypsy Guitars* is a straight ahead traditional and finest outing featuring all elements of his style – Manouche waltzes with "Chez Jacquet" and the definitive "La Gitane," standards including the obscure gems "Japanese Sandman," and "Deep Purple" and the Reinhardt classic "Blues en Mineur." *Caprice* features Angelo with a more modern band including piano with several tracks having been recorded on electric guitar.

Jean-Yves Dubanton &
Jean-Claude Laudat
***Mon Pote le Gitan* – AE01**
***Le Jazz et La Java* – AE02**
jazzetjava@aol.com
http://www.buffalobrosguitars.com/htm

While many groups play in the traditional Manouche Swing style with the occasional foray into the world of Swing Musette, few attack it head on. Jean-Yves Dubanton and Jean-Claude Laudat, playing guitar and accordion respectively, are both members of Alma Sinti, and began playing a weekly gig together in the early 90s. Together they play a scintillating blend of Swing Musette, Sinti Jazz, and Valse Manouche that calls to mind the sophisticated small groups of the 30s—one in which Reinhardt himself might have found himself in.

This is elegant music for a classy bistro. Dubanton's swinging rhythm work, supple leads and enticing crooning make for a refreshing change from the veritable barrage of Mach 1 Gypsy soloists out to make their bones. Don't let this fool you, Dubanton can rip with the best of 'em and Laudat more than proves why he is one of the finest accordionists in Paris. *Mon Pote Le Gitan (My Pal the Gypsy)* features the two as they are every Thursday evening at the café Chez Elle in Paris, guitar, accordion and vocals running through a varied set of tunes. "Just One of Those Things" treated as a rhumba, "Jersey Bounce," Flambée Montalbanaise," "Le Bal de la Marine," and the obligatory "Minor

Swing" and "Nuages" are all played like no other group on the scene. *Le Jazz et La Java* takes a different approach, adding an ensemble of guest players including Samy Daussat and Patrick Saussois playing in styles that range from down-and-dirty Manouche Swing to bluesy jazz à la Kansas City. The artists released these CDs themselves and while distribution is being worked out in the US one can always contact the band!

Francis-Alfred Moermon
***Passion* – Djaz Records**
http://www.buffalobrosguitars.com/boutique.htm

Francis-Alfred Moermon, a Dutch Gadjo (non-Gypsy) got his start backing the venerable Sarane Ferret while still a teenager. He went to accompany all of the Ferret brothers, Django's first son Lousson Reinhardt, and many other legends of the genre. Currently he is one of the few exponents able to follow the style laid out by Matelo and exemplified by the little known Maurice Ferré—the blend of Russian, Eastern European melodies, Chanson, Musette and Swing called Guitare Tzigane de Paris. While this may not be Hot Club style swing, there are some fine examples herein. Moermon is a skilled guitarist, gifted composer and all around wonderful musician whose work is integral to those looking to investigate and explore this side of the Jazz Manouche.

Germany

Schnuckenack Reinhardt
***Starportrait* – Djinee tu Kowa Ziro**
Musik Deutscher Zigeuner 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8
http://www.jpc.de

Schnuckenack is the father of the German Sinti jazz scene. It's difficult to gauge exactly what the sound of the German scene was like before he recorded as Schnuckenack was the first to be recorded in the 60s when he was already in his late 40s. Regardless, it is upon his foundations that the German scene was built and as such, his music is indispensable. Electric guitarist Bobby Falta leads the group through some highly swinging numbers including "Fate", "Sweet Georgia Brown", "Avalon" and "I Can't Give You Anything but Love". While impressive although somewhat primitive when compared to the likes of Häns'che Weiss who replaces Falta on *Musik Deutscher Zigeuner 3*. The contrasts in their style are unmistakable. Schnuckenack's music, as with his French contemporaries the Ferret brothers, is indispensable.

Häns'che Weiss
Musik Deutscher Zigeuner 5
Errinnurgen
http://www.jpc.de

Perhaps Germany's most dynamic player, Häns'che Weiss brought a recognizable sophistication to Schnuckenack Reinhardt's rough and tumble band in 1970 only to leave a short time later and co-lead an incredible ensemble with the teenage wunderkind Titi Winterstein. *Musik Deutscher Zigeuner 5* highlights this streamlined; all-acoustic powerhouse ensemble that solidified the foundations of the German style as defined by Schnuckenack: an evocative and highly dynamic violin style with obvious nods to the Hungarian traditions and lead guitar played with that same considerable force supported by usually two and sometimes three aggressive rhythm guitars displaying a hard and heavy attack. These characteristics stand in marked contrast with the subtler, danceable styles of the French and Dutch Gypsies.

Weiss has never stopped evolving. His style today follows the post WWII American sound as displayed by legendary guitarists Bucky Pizzarelli, Carl Kress and others: a chordal style which deftly navigates the fingerboard of his electric Epiphone archtop with an endless flurry of passing chords, inversions, chordal flourishes, tremolos, octave and single note solos. Both *Errinnurgen* and *Vis-à-Vis*, (recorded in trio format with Häns'che's son Martin on violin and Swiss bassist Valeri Meyer on bass) illustrate this dramatically and offer a tantalizing development, as there are few Sinti guitarists interested in acquiring a more "straight" sound. However, while his comping and sophisticated chordal style give a more than subtle nod to American mainstream jazz, his single note solos are still rife with the fiery Hot Club style that first garnered him the praise and adulation.

Lulu Reinhardt
Titi Winterstein Quintett – Djinee tu Kowa Ziro
Titi Winterstein Quintet – Live mit Vanessa and Sorba
http://www.jpc.de

An addition to the house that Schnuckenack built, Titi Winterstein started his career as a teenaged prodigy with scorching technique. His Quintett features Lulu Reinhardt who exemplifies the German traditional of guitar playing. His speed, articulation and seemingly endless runs are jaw dropping. These releases capture the band doing what they do best; playing swing intermingled with traditional Gypsy melodies and songs, some of which are sung in their traditional language of Romany. Pound for pound, this band has more flat-out musical testosterone than anyone.

Martin Weiss Ensemble – featuring Kussi Weiss
Savoir Vivre
http://www.amazon.de

Representing the new school of German playing, Kussi takes the hard-hitting traditional German style and combines it with Stochelo Rosenberg's crisp tonality and

refined sense articulation and melody. Just as Titi and Häns'che's group helped solidify the traditions of the German Sinto from the example laid down by the previous generation, Martin and Kussi are doing the same for the new generation. *Savoir Vivre* represents a slight softening of the aggressive and hard German sound as heard in the straight swing of "I Love You", the evocative bossa-like "You Are My Everything", the foreboding "Oblivion" or a mid-tempo and bluesy "Whispering". Rhythm guitarist Tschabo Frazen favors a 1947 Gibson L7 that, when combined with Kussi's more traditional sounding DiMauro Selmer styled guitar offers a more two-dimensional rhythm section. This is a refined and sophisticated release and no one who hears it turns a deaf ear.

Alsace

Tchavolo Schmitt
Alors…Voila!
Miri Familia
http://www.buffalobrosguitars.com/boutique.htm

As one would expect from a region that lies on the Franco/German border, Alsace borrows its stylistic hallmarks from each country taking the more traditionalized "Hot Club" style and combining it with the harder plectra attack of the German school under Alsacian master Tchavolo Schmitt. Born in France, he was a mainstay on the Parisian scene until relocating to Alsace after visiting family. As a player bordering the second and third generation of Gypsy Swingers, his style is highly traditional defined by a combination of his own majestic compositions and standards including "All of Me," "It Had To Be You," and "The Sheik of Araby." He has become a giant without ever really wanting to be one. Shunning the spotlight and rarely recording in the past 30 years, the release of *Alors?…Voila!*, which Romane produced, immediately became an instant classic and one of the most talked about released on the year. Followed shortly thereafter with *Miri Familia,* which features Tchavolo backed by the crème-de-la-crème of Alsacian musicians including Mandino Reinhardt of Note Manouche and Dorado Schmitt's longtime rhythm man Hono Winterstein. Both represent some of the finest in Gypsy jazz.

Dorado Schmitt
Parisienne
Gypsy Reunion *Swing 93*
http://www.buffalobrosguitars.com/boutique.htm

Schmitt is quite possibly one of the most influential instrumentalist/composers to come on the scene in the last 20 years. Echoes of his style can be heard in the playing of Stochelo Rosenberg and Romane and his composition "Bossa Dorado" is one of the tunes that is guaranteed to come up at a jam. Sadly, his two most dynamic albums, 1983's *Hommage à la Romenes* and 1985's *Notre Histoire* have been out of print for years (although there are plans currently in the works for remastering and re-releasing both).

Parisienne, a more contemporary outing, places Dorado with a mainstream band using an electric guitar. The results are quite stimulating as Dorado deftly navigates a course through 13 original tunes that covers a broad stylistic pallet from modern jazz, to the gypsy bossa, waltzes, blues and ballads. While *Parisienne* illustrates some of the advances in the style, look beneath the surface and it's easy to hear what the audience has come to expect from any Gypsy Jazzer—swinging and virtuosic solos that can only be described as daunting as they are inspiring. Gypsy Reunion *Swing 93* is a more traditional outing featuring original tunes played and sung with his backing trio, including Nouna Schmitt on vocals. *Swing 93* also features a rare appearance by Tchavolo. The band is in fine form with Patrick Saussois, under whose supervision both these items were recorded, joins the band on a number of tracks.

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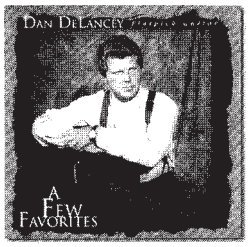

Listening to him play, it is certainly evident that arrangement is something Dan does very well. His arrangements are interesting, exciting, tasteful and well performed.
—Dan Miller, Editor
Flatpicking Guitar Magazine

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Note Manouche
***Note Manouche* – Djaz DJ711-2**
http://www.buffalobrosguitars.com/boutique.htm

Note Manouche is daring in design, as it's a release of all original material that quite simply places this quartet in another league. Co-led by blind accordionist Marcel Loeffler and guitarist Mandino Reinhardt, Note Manouche play and sound like no other band. There are no cover tunes at all which make them somewhat difficult to classify. Whereas Sinti Jazz places so much emphasis on the repetition of specific tunes, Note Manouche simply brush such distractions to the side and focus on one thing – Music. The music that they make is exemplifies that which is integral to a top shelf release in any genre of music, namely taste, tone and touch. Each successive number swings fervently on tunes that are fresh and inviting. Simply put, Jazz Manouche could use more bands like this.

Holland

Fapy Lafertin
Star Eyes
My Melancholy Baby

Easily the only player capable of capturing Django's spirit in an non synthetic way, Fapy has been on the scene for over 30 years playing in the traditional style, first with his seminal group Waso, which he co-led with multi-instrumentalist Koen de Cauter and later on his own. This is a band that would've given the original Hot Club a run for its money. As such, Fapy stays to the traditional side of the music always playing acoustic with violin; one or two rhythm guitarists and bass and occasionally will substitute a drummer for rhythm guitarist. Star Eyes, his most recent outing has garnered rave reviews from critics the world over. *My Melancholy Baby* and *Swing Guitares* were recorded with the British group Le Jazz using a 30s RCA Ribbon Mic in an attempt to make them sound like the original Quintette did. The results are startling and lend further credence to Fapy's already solid reputation as "The King."

The Rosenberg Trio
Seresta
Live at the North Sea Jazz Festival
http://www.rosenberg-trio.com

The recorded output of the Rosenberg Trio is large, but these two CD's are the best. *Seresta* brought Rosenberg to the worlds attention and instantly catapulted him to the top of a very short list of "Best of the Best." Just about every young player who was at the impressionable age when these two albums were released imitates his glistening touch, velvety vibrato, and fiery licks and runs. Interestingly enough, it could be argued that Stochelo's influence is so wide ranging that it is contributing to the breakdown of regional characteristics that separate the Dutch from the French and German Sinto. However, if you believe that the Rosenberg trio is all Stochelo, you are sorely mistaken. Rhythm guitarist and cousin Nous'che is the finest rhythm guitarist in the style today, and quite possibly the finest ever. His creative comping, use of passing chords and different inversions and his rock-steady time has raised the art of rhythm guitar to a new level. Any rhythm guitarist from any style can learn from Nous'che's shining example. Although *Live at the North Sea Jazz Festival* is essentially the same set as *Seresta*, it remains one of their best selling albums to date.

Jimmy Rosenberg
***Hot Club de Norvege with Jimmy and Ola* – Hot Club Records HCRCD130**
http://www.towerrecords.com

Jimmy Rosenberg is Stochelo's cousin. Many remember Jimmy as the precocious little kid playing the fire out of a guitar that he could barely hold. While growing up in the spotlight, it is easy to hear that early he borrowed freely from Stochelo's book, but one listening to this CD proves that this kid has something altogether different. This is undoubtedly his finest recording and offers a glimpse into what could quite possibly be one of the best guitarists ever, which makes Jimmy's current inactivity all the more frustrating. Like the best jazz musician, he can improvise freely and given the chance to continue to evolve there is no telling how far he could go. Accompanied by 18-year-old violin virtuoso Ola Kvernberg, these two have a solid musical rapport and obviously bring out the best in each other.

Basily
Swing For The Gypsies
http://home.wanadoo.nl/relektro/

This Dutch band, made up of members of the Limberger and Basily families is unique in their approach, including both piano and trumpet on many of their recordings. Lead guitarist Popi Basily has a penchant for bebop, something the he plays with exceeding skill on both acoustic and electric guitars. *Swing for the Gypsies* features a fine mix of material that borders on the progressive with more than subtle nods to mainstream jazz, while retaining the traditional feel. The piano and trumpet on some tunes elevate this release from and the inclusion of such bop standards as "Ornithology," "Oleo," and "How High the Moon" more than elude to their progressive tendencies.

Robin Nolan Trio
The Street
Ballads
http://www.robinnolantrio.com

Robin Nolan is the man responsible for making Jazz Manouche accessible to all via his play-along CDs and books and his several tours of the US. His approach is as technical and swinging as his Gypsy counterparts, yet his style is somewhat different. A trained musician, he studied jazz at Leeds School of Music in London,

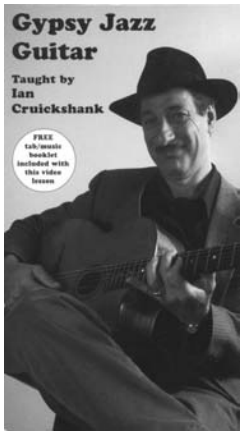
although his "legit" style is comprised of a different vocabulary altogether. Regardless, he is one of the most popular players on the scene today because he is one of the finest guitarists on the scene. One can't go wrong with any of his recorded output. *The Street* stands out for its focus on some of the more traditional aspects of Jazz Manouche with tunes including "Out of Nowhere," "Noto Swing," "It Don't Mean a Thing," and "Body and Soul." Ballads is pretty self-explanatory and a fine mellow recordings for all those hopeless romantics.

For reviews of Gypsy jazz style recording in the United States see the following in back issues of *Flatpicking Guitar*:

- Raul Reynoso *Royal Street*: Vol. 1, No. 6
- Tony Green *Gypsy Jazz*: Vol. 2, No. 1
- Hot Club of Cowtown Swing *Stampede*: Vol. 3, No. 3
- Hot Strings *Douce Ambiance*: Vol. 3, No. 5
- Pearl Django *Avalon*: Vol. 5, No. 2
- Frank Vignola *Blues for a Gypsy*: Vol. 5, No. 6

Instructional Book and Video Reviews

Gypsy Jazz Guitar by Ian Cruickshank Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop



Reviewed by David McCarty

Learning to play the Gypsy jazz guitar style pioneered by Django Reinhardt and other flatpicking guitar innovators in the 1930s typically consists of being born into a Gypsy family and growing up playing guitar from the time you're old enough to get your arms around the instrument. Alas, for all too many of us, that's not an option.

But modern technology and teaching techniques can compensate in some measure for the lack of cultural influence in learning this dazzling style. The true manouche players would say you cannot truly learn the style from books or videos, but at least those media can help open up this often-bewildering style to the uninitiated.

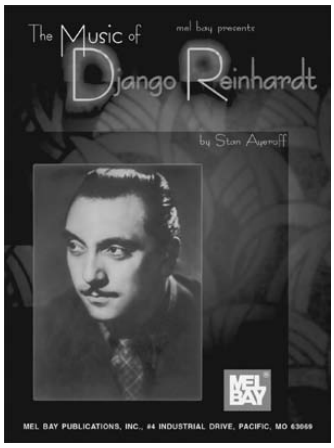
One very strong entry in this arena is *Gypsy Jazz Guitar*, a 55-minute video produced by noted English Gypsy jazz guitarist Ian Cruickshank. A fluid, stylish guitarist who's recorded on his own and with the Seattle-based Pearl Django group, Cruickshank has spent decades systematically studying the Django style of guitar. On this video, he successfully communicates a huge amount of information on the unique musical vocabulary and innovative guitar techniques Reinhardt created in a clear and understandable fashion. He starts with some simple exercises showing Django's fluid, elegant right-hand picking technique, then moves into the often convoluted left-hand style Django crafted to compensate for his severely injured fretting hand. Many of the techniques here are familiar to American flatpicking guitarists, such as vibrato, hammer-ons and pull-offs. Another critical element is rhythm, and Cruickshank effectively demonstrates a variety of Gypsy jazz chord forms and the distinctive rhythm patterns that give this swing music such propulsion and force. Before long, the student is working on triads and chord inversions, integrating diminished chords and minor sixth chords into common progressions to create the oddly angular sound the style is noted for.

The final portion of the tape covers common devices found in Django's solos, including arpeggio licks and chromatic runs, his famous use of octaves as a soloing device, and much more. It's really remarkable that Cruickshank can compress so much information into a single tape.

What this tape does not provide, however, is any sort of repertoire or frame of reference to use these new tools other than the basic chord progressions. Cruickshank assumes that the student has at least a passing knowledge of Django tunes and jazz standards played in the Gypsy style and wants to develop the technique needed to make those tunes sound more authentic in their rhythm and lead work.

All in all, this is an excellent tape, using good video techniques to help the student see as well as hear the techniques and topics being covered. It won't make you sound like you spent your youth sitting around a Gypsy campfire playing Dark Eyes until your fingers bled, but it's a good start.

Django Reinhardt Solos by Stan Ayeroff Mel Bay, 2002


mel bay presents
The Music of Django Reinhardt
by Stan Ayeroff
MEL BAY
MEL BAY PUBLICATIONS, INC., #4 INDUSTRIAL DRIVE, PACIFIC, MO 63069

Reviewed by David Moultrup

If this issue of *FGM* has whetted your appetite for Gypsy jazz, Stan Ayeroff has put together a fine exploration of Django's style. There are several key features of the book which make it stand out. As expected, there is a good selection of transcribed solos to learn. Even more importantly, Ayeroff identifies and labels an intriguing series of repeating patterns in Django's playing.

For example, he has identified a pattern which he has labeled "BA4", which is a "below above 4 note figure". Another pattern is called "nn", or "neighbor note". Out of context these two examples may seem a bit simplistic. But in the course of the book, these labels, in conjunction with the other devices he has identified, serve to expose extremely important patterns. Ultimately, the identified patterns make it easier to hear, understand, and play Django's style.

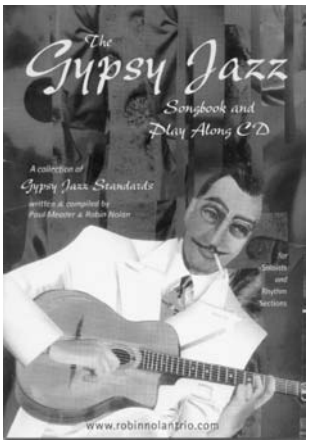
These patterns of melodic invention are integrated with a sophisticated harmonic analysis to give a very thorough discussion of each solo. For example, in one measure of "St. Louis Blues," Ayeroff identifies a G harmonic minor scale against D7 into D7b9 arpeggio.

There are a few complications to consider with this book. It would be a

real stretch for a beginner. It strikes this reviewer as something that even the average intermediate guitarist may best digest with the help of a teacher. Full use of the book would come with several well developed skills. First, reading standard music notation is a must, since there is no tab in the book. (Developing this skill will not trigger excommunication from the bluegrass/folk community. And it's really not that hard. Really!) Secondly, a reasonably solid understanding of harmony will facilitate a true understanding of the music, and the detailed analysis provided by Ayeroff. Finally, a fairly strong background in scales and modes would supplement the cursory treatment of this area given in the book.

Django Reinhardt Solos will be a stretch for many guitarists, but it fills a real niche in the literature. For the advancing guitarist who wants to dig deep into the style of Django Reinhardt, this book is an excellent opportunity.

The Gypsy Jazz Songbook: Volumes 1 to 4
Paul Meader and Robin Nolan



Reviewed by Jerry W. Rudy

To this camper, two highlights of Steve Kaufman's 2001 guitar camp were John Carlini and Steve Bennett jamming on the Ellington war horse, "Oh! Lady Be Good," during a couple of lunch breaks and Marcy Marxer's brief introduction to swing chords. Since then, I have been seeking as much material on swing music as I could find. This journey ultimately led to a fascination with the great gypsy jazz guitarist and composer, Django Reinhardt, and the music he inspired.

The acoustic guitar emerged as a solo instrument in traditional American music in the 60s when Doc Watson burst on the folk scene. Since that time, under the influence of the likes of Clarence White and Tony Rice, the level of play has risen to almost dizzying heights. As the readers of this issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* know, however, acoustic guitar improvisation was brought to a previously unimaginable level of virtuosity and creativity long before the 60s, when in the 30s Django began to lay down a legacy of recorded work at which one can still only marvel. His repertoire included original compositions, sometimes in collaboration with the jazz violinist, Stephane Grappelli, and scores of American jazz standards, stamped with his own style of swing rhythm and improvisation.

Once you get into his music, you have to play it. To the uninitiated, however, the pace and different chord arrangements with their rapid changes make this music seem inaccessible. Yet, with some knowledge of swing chord structure, practice, and the *Gypsy Jazz Songbook* series that Paul Meader and Robin Nolan of the Robin Nolan Trio have published, I am happy to say that you can be playing this music very quickly.

The Robin Nolan Trio is a fabulously "hot" Gypsy jazz group who have been performing and recording since 1992. Fortunately, for us wannabe's, Paul and Robin are also educators and passionately concerned with making Gypsy jazz music accessible to guitar players around the world. Thus, Paul and Robin have written and produced a four-volume series, called The *Gypsy Jazz Songbook* (with plans to go to six volumes), which is a treasure trove to those of us wanting to learn this style of music.

Naturally, the specific content of each book varies but they share several important features. For each tune, a relatively simple melody line is laid out in tablature form. The opposite page provides the chord changes for the song, as well as the chord forms that give the Gypsy rhythm guitar its unique sound, are provided. The chord voicings are true to the Gypsy jazz sound and with a little practice are easy to play. A notable feature of this material is that it is set in large type and easy to read. (When you get to be my age that is important.) Each book also contains a CD that provides the melody line and the rhythm guitar for each song. After Robin plays through the melody line, he and Paul then lay down a rhythm section that goes through the entire song several times and in some cases at a couple of tempos. This strong feature allows you to practice melody, improvisation, and rhythm changes against the real thing. So, these are more than song books; they are valuable instructional tools that enable you to make rapid progress just by playing the music.

Though similar in format each book provides a little something different. Thus, Volume One provides a mixture of Django compositions (e.g., "Djangology," "Minor Swing," "Nuages") and several American standards ("Oh! Lady Be Good," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "It Don't Mean a Thing") to get you comfortable with the genre. Volume two raises the ante a bit and features a selection of three tunes ("Swing 42," "Daphne," and "Belleville") to illustrate Django's experimentation with "rhythm changes," the term used by jazz musicians to signify the musical form based on the chord changes of George Gershwin's "I've Got Rhythm." Volume two also includes a personal favorite, Dorado Schmitt's "Lotcha Drom." Once heard, it becomes irresistible. In Volume Three, *The Latin Songbook*, Paul and Robin embrace a different concept, introducing the student to the melding of Latin rhythms and Gypsy jazz. This volume is organized around four categories, Gypsy Bolero, Gypsy Tango, Gypsy Bossa, and Gypsy Samba. This is a new and exciting development in the Gypsy jazz world. Volume Four, the most recent addition to the collection, returns to the more familiar format of Django compositions ("Anouman" and "Tears") and American standards ("I'll See You in My Dreams," "Limehouse Blues," "Night and Day"). A novel feature of this volume is its examples of the various rhythm styles played in slow tempo, including rhythm triplets and the "Django shuffle."

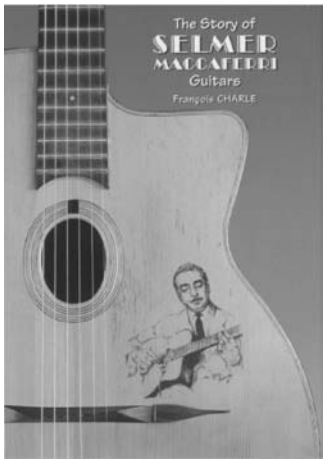
Against otherwise high praise, it should be noted that those of you with advanced soloing skills will be somewhat disappointed to find that only a relatively simple melody line is provided for each tune. Paul and Robin do not provide a detailed note-for-note transcription of Django's or their version of the song, nor will you find a page full of licks and tricks to add to your repertoire. Their intention was to provide a foundation to improvise around but to leave it to the player to listen to the original tunes and earn the licks by developing a good ear.

Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to mention the quality of the publications. They are the best produced of the many that I own, printed on high-quality glossy

paper, with original and tasteful artistic representations of the Gypsy guitar and Gypsy heritage sprinkled throughout the book. On the cover of each volume is an original stylistic portrait of Django by Carolyn Ridsdale, which itself adds considerable value to the books. Check out www.robinnolantrio.com to purchase the song books and to find out more about the Robin Nolan Trio.

Guitar Book Review

The Story of the SELMER MACCAFFARI Guitars
By François Charle



Reviewed by Jerry W. Rudy

In traditional American flatpicking music, the acoustic guitar is inseparably linked to the C.F. Martin Company. With a legacy that begins in 1833 and a reputation for high quality that continues to this day, Martins are still the reference against which other acoustic guitars are compared. In particular, the Dreadnought model (D-18 and D-28), which evolved in the early 30s, is a legendary instrument made famous by the likes of Doc Watson and Tony Rice, celebrated in song ("Thank you, Mr. Martin"), and played by virtually the who's who of the flatpicking guitar world.

The C. F. Martin Company's business was the production of guitars. In contrast, the Selmer Company, founded in about 1919 in France by Henri Selmer, was primarily concerned with the production of high-quality wind instruments, and its involvement in guitar manufacturing was almost incidental. Yet, due to a happy coincident of two events, for a brief period the Selmer Company made a major contribution to the evolution and production of acoustic guitars and left a legacy that continues to influence the manufacturing of acoustic instruments for the Gypsy jazz musician.

As told by François Charle, the ascendance of the Selmer Company into the history of the acoustic guitar begins in 1930 when Mario Maccaferri, a renowned concert guitarist and luthier, was introduced to the Selmer Company to discuss his ideas for the creation of a new guitar which would be a great improvement over existing instruments. Henri Selmer was convinced and agreed to provide Maccaferri with space and a workforce to manufacture his guitar. Two years later the so-called Selmer-Maccaferri guitar, with the unusually large D-shaped sound hole, was in production. Although the relationship between Maccaferri and Selmer lasted only about 2 years, it set in motion the process that ultimately led to the development of the Selmer guitar with the distinctive cutaway and small, oval-shaped sound hole.

This brings us to the second event that conspired to immortalize the Selmer guitar. At roughly the same time that the Selmer-Maccaferri guitar went into production, Django Reinhardt began his legendary career as the jazz improvisario and innovator, and the Selmer guitar with the oval-shaped sound hole became his instrument. Without Django's identification with this instrument and the distinctive music and style he created, it is doubtful that the Selmer guitar would be of historical or contemporary significance. Unfortunately, both stars, the Selmer Company and Django, flared far too briefly. In 1952, after only 20 years of production, the Selmer Company closed its guitar shop, and Django died in 1953.

Until recently neither the broad outlines nor the details of the Selmer-Maccaferri-Django story were widely known. However, in what was clearly a labor of love, François Charle has provided a remarkable account of the events that make up the tale. Charle combines words, photographs, and graphics to produce what can only be described as a magnificent volume. The story is told in several stages. First, the reader is introduced to Henri Selmer and the place of the Selmer Company in the history of wind instruments. Next is a brief biography of Mario Maccaferri, a remarkable individual, a gifted musician, luthier, craftsman, and inventor who made contributions to both the guitar and to reed instruments.

Charle then describes the guitars manufactured by Selmer, beginning with the original design by Maccaferri (the Selmer-Maccaferri guitar) and other instruments Selmer produced during this period. As noted, the Selmer-Maccaferri relationship was short lived and, between 1934 and 1936, Maccaferri's design evolved into the guitar made famous by Django. Interspersed with this history of the guitars are brief biographies of Django and some other less well-known guitarists.

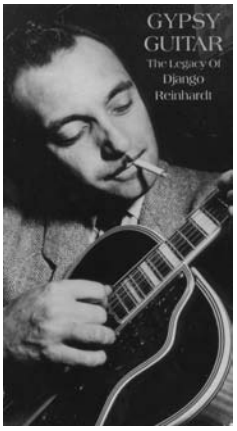
Luthiers will find the next section, which describes the construction of the guitars, especially interesting. One of Maccaferri's ideas for improving the sonority of the guitar was to place a sound box or resonator inside the main body of the guitar. This made for a rather complicated manufacturing process and a nightmare for repair. This innovation was also responsible for the overly large D-shaped sound hole. Unfortunately, most guitarists did not consider this a successful innovation. It is nonetheless a fascinating piece of guitar history.

Other sections of the book describe successors to Django in the Gypsy jazz scene and some of the contemporary luthiers who are continuing the Selmer tradition. In the appendix, Charle provides a list of the serial-numbered guitars and, where known, their buyers. Less than 1000 were made and very few now exist.

The visual supplements to this book are stunning. Period photographs of individual craftsmen, artists, and work environments provide a context for the reader to appreciate the text. The color photographs of the various Selmer guitars are the best I have ever seen, and the graphics of the advertisements for the instruments and performances by Django are delightful. Apparently no expense was spared in the production of this book. It is a work of art.

François Charle has produced a book that is a must for the Gypsy jazz fan, but anyone interested in the acoustic guitar will enjoy it immensely. Only a limited number of copies, however, were printed. The thousand French editions have all been purchased, and the 2000 English editions are going fast. You can order this book directly from François Charle at www.rfcharle.com or from www.elderly.com.

Gypsy Guitar –
The Legacy of Django Reinhardt
Shanachie Videos 6301



Review by David McCarty

This 1992 video attempts, mostly successfully, to capture the spirit and scope of the Gypsy jazz scene in Europe. Utilizing passages of a French documentary on Django, plus new footage of jams, performances and interviews with top contemporary players, the video introduces the viewer to many aspects of this fascinating music and the culture that created and supports it.

Many of the brightest lights in Gypsy jazz are prominently featured here. We see several interviews with Django's son, Babik, and hear him in jams and in performance at the annual Django Reinhardt festival in Samois, France. Babik's insights into his father's musical inspirations are especially enlightening. There's a very brief biography of Django covering his family history, the accident that deformed his hand and his career with the Hot Club of France.

But the focus here is on Django's heirs, and the video brilliantly selects players that would go on to become the top players in the field. So we get numerous examples of the amazingly brilliant Stochelo Rosenberg playing alone, with his trio and in other settings. Stochelo simply blows away most players even in this highly technical flatpicking style, and for American flatpickers used to hearing players like Dan Crary and Tony Rice, his astounding command of the entire fingerboard and rapid-fire right hand technique will be a revelation in what's possible on the steel-string acoustic guitar.

Stochelo's younger cousin, Jimmy, is featured in a delightful sequence playing with the Gypsy Kids, the group that would go on to become Sinti. Jimmy must have been about 8 when the video was made, and the guitar literally engulfs his tiny body. But when he starts to play, it's hard to believe any child so small can get so much sound and technique out of the instrument. And perhaps the greatest Django prodigy of them all, Bireli Lagrene, makes a guest appearance to play with Babik Reinhardt that sounds as close to a father-son jam as we'll ever hear.

Boulou and Elios Ferret, whose father played with Django, offer an engaging interview where they delve into the musical underpinnings of the Gypsy jazz style, especially the fascination Django had with playing waltz tunes in bebop style.

There's plenty of great music here, of course, with such classic Gypsy swing tunes as "Minor Swing," "Douce Ambiance," "Djangology," "Dark Eyes," "Nuages," and many more performed by these great players.

Gypsy Guitar is not a great documentary on Django Reinhardt, or even on the Gypsy jazz scene generally. But it does offer new fans an inside look into this brilliant guitar music and provides video of some of the greatest players that will help illuminate the technical demands this style requires of a flatpicking guitarist. Well worth seeking out.

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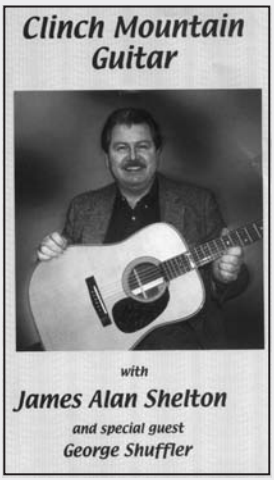

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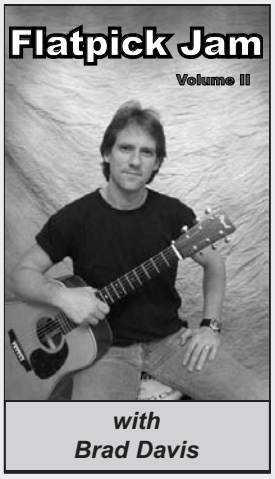

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Then I met this guy at the festival in Bean Blossom. We were doing a little shade-tree picking, and he was singing wonderfully. When we finished "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," he asked me why I didn't join in on harmony.

"I can't harmonize," I said. "I didn't want to mess up your singing by sounding like a bullfrog in heat."

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"It's not hard," he replied. "let me loan you my CDs, and you'll see my secret."

He handed me a CD pack entitled "how To Sing Bluegrass Harmony"--a mail-order course! I never bought a mial-order course. I just couldn't thrust I'd get good instruction from something I couldn't try out right away.

He told me, "This course came with a guarantee...if I didn't think it was good within 10 days, I'd get my money back. And it couldn't hurt to try it with a guarantee!"

"But you could sing harmony a little, so you could learn quicker--"

"nope! I sang harmonhy like a bullfrog in heat, too!"

We laughed, and he left me with a cheerful, "Try those tapes out."

Well, I played that course all the way home in my car, and I sang til I was hoarse. I sure felt like I was learning... but the real test was yet to come.

Next Tuesday I met with my pickin" buddies, like I always do. Just before we started "Fox On The Run," I told my friends I was going to sing harmonhy. They all laughed (I knew they would), and Charlie cracked, "What kind of harmony? Froggy tenor?"

"Let's just do it," Isaid. "I got a surprise for you boys."

They kept giggling, but you should've seen their faces when I started singing harmony. They were amazed. Charlie even accused me of getting 'harmony surgery' instead of going to Bean Blossom. Naturally, they all wanted to learn mhy secret. I just smiled, and said "Harmony singing is a skill as much as a gift. And this course got me working mhy skill the right way."

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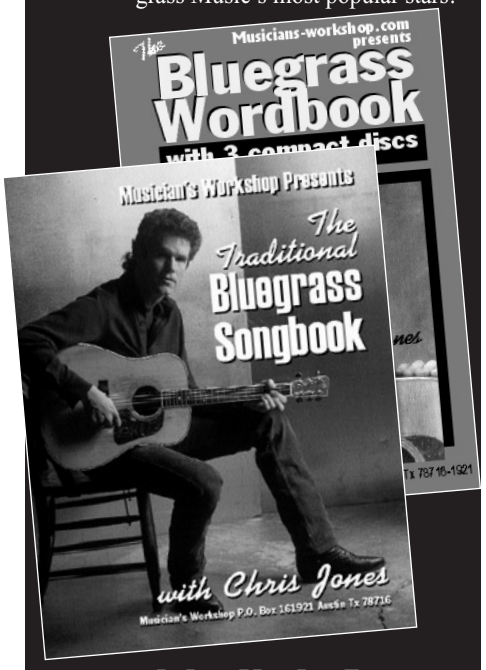

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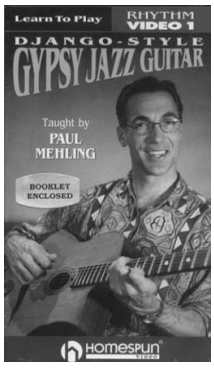

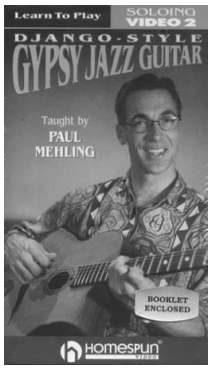

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Three generations on a Martin

Bill Coyle can't wait to jam after Sunday dinner at his parents' house with his dad, Patrick, 57, and Pop-Pop, Bill Linville, 86—all proudly and loudly on their Martins (l to r: a D-15, a D-41, a D-18).

"I first fell in love with a Martin at 13 when Pop-Pop let me play his 1937 D-18.

"He'd bought it new and paid $3 a week to get it. He says it plays sweeter every year. I can hear it too. 'In guitars, quality pays,' he always told me. 'Buy a Martin.'

"My father, Pat Coyle, was a police officer in Maplewood, NJ. He was chasing a stolen car and got hit in a head-on collision. Dad was rushed to the hospital, suffered post-traumatic stress and had to retire. He was a good guitarist. He needed the therapy of playing to help him recover. But his acoustic guitar was a pain to play. He wouldn't touch it. My brother said, 'Let's get him a new one.' Pop-Pop said, 'Quality pays. Buy a Martin.' We all chipped in and bought Dad a D-15. Now he plays all the time. He said, 'I don't sound bad anymore.' He's improving with that therapy.

"Just about then, I could tell I was ready to buy a Martin; but the one I wanted was expensive. My wife said, 'Sell your motorcycle.' I did. Now every night I take out that D-41. When my friends talk about buying a guitar, I give 'em Pop-Pop's famous words, 'Quality pays. Buy a Martin.'"—***William Coyle, Maywood, NJ***

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